

# The Potato Minute

August 1, 2020



## EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT - Terence Hochstein

As we enter into the 'dog days' of summer and harvest just around the corner, we all need to step back a moment and reflect on the last 150 days. Every single decision that each of us has made, was influenced by a recently discovered COVID-19, changing the history of the world forever. Multi-national business' have filed for bankruptcy, small business' have closed forever, governments have spent their tax payer's dollars into multiple lifetimes of debt, and yet we still do not have a firm grasp or understanding of what we are dealing with. I do not believe that I have talked to a single person that has not made some adjustments to how they conduct their daily business or personal life. Many have said that some of these changes, for argument sake, have been long overdue and in the long run probably for the better. One thing is for certain, the way that people live and carry on their daily lives will change throughout the world forever.

Our business, the potato industry, has not been immune to the COVID-19 crisis. Back in late February, the seed industry was scrambling to find enough seed to meet their customer demands. That changed overnight, to a situation where a portion of the 2019-20 seed crop had to be disposed of. The processing side of the business was no different, at first there was just enough potatoes contracted to fill the contract year, then there was an overabundance of raw product, with growers having to find alternative uses for, already contracted volume, that had been released by the processors. Once again, the demand for frozen products changed and processors were scrambling to find enough raw product to meet their demands. Now with the daily increases of confirmed COVID numbers across North America, some are starting to wonder if this demand is going to be short lived. One needs a crystal ball to determine where we will be tomorrow, let alone next week or month.

Our growers, like all primary agricultural producers, are a few weeks away from harvesting their 2020 crop with no guarantee that it will be utilized. Second only to a producer's family and their employees, is a farmer's pride of producing a healthy, safe crop for the rest of the world to eat.

The unfortunate part of this, is that it has become evidently glaring that the majority of today's population has no clue or appreciation as to what it takes to grow food, or where it comes from. Throughout this entire pandemic, I have spent countless hours and days justifying what we do as an industry and how we are contributing to the sustainable future of feeding society. The lack or willingness to understand agriculture is frustrating in one sense, but the opportunity to talk about it and educate people is rewarding.

As September unfolds before us and we all get busy with harvest, please remember that we are all vulnerable to this disease. Take the time to provide the necessary precautions for yourself, your family and all that work for you and with you. We all need to get through this and continue to do what we do best...produce food for a hungry world.

*Until next month, stay safe!*

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*photo by Henk Kamper*

## SEED COORDINATOR UPDATE- Stacey Bajema

Everything is in full swing here at CDCN. The weather is showing signs of improvement and everyone is happy to get out into the fields! I was happy this month to be able to make the trek down to Taber for the first time to meet with the Board and especially the staff. It was surreal to have been working with some members of the staff on a regular basis for months but never met in person. I'm glad to be working with this great group of people!

I have heard from several of our seed growers that they have also been making their way down south to meet with customers. The loss of the Golf Tournament and Burgers and Beans, due to restrictions on gatherings was a loss for our seed growers to network and connect with their customers regarding the upcoming season. We encourage our growers to continue to find ways to engage with your customers, even if it can only be just over the phone. If this past shipping season has shown us anything, it is that

building strong relationships and maintaining good communication with your customers is vital to a successful season.

Deb and I continue to work closely in preparation for the official transition of our positions. Although, it was not a typical year due to COVID-19, I think training through times of adversity can never be a bad thing.

If you have any questions or need anything, please feel free to contact me anytime.

[stacey@albertapotatoes.ca](mailto:stacey@albertapotatoes.ca)  
780.916.1766



*Stacey Bajema (right) and Annette Visser of Norbest Farms (left) scouting Hi Generation Seed plots in northern Alberta.*

### URGENT NOTICE:

**CFIA (CANADIAN FOOD INSPECTION AGENCY) IS INVESTIGATING REPORTS OF INDIVIDUALS RECEIVING UNSOLICITED PACKAGES OF SEEDS.**

**Do not plant seeds from unknown origins. Unauthorized seeds could be the seeds of invasive plants, or carry plant pests, which can be harmful when introduced into Canada. These species can invade agricultural and natural areas, causing serious damage to our plant resources.**

**If you receive a seed package that you did not order, please contact your [regional CFIA office](#) immediately. Keep the seeds and packaging, including the mailing label until a CFIA inspector contacts you with further instructions.**



## AGRICULTURAL DIRECTOR - Thomas McDade

### Research activities at the University of Lethbridge



It is the middle of summer. The University of Lethbridge campus is still closed, but restrictions are gradually easing and we see more of our colleagues back in the lab re-starting their work.

Our Potato Pest Monitoring program has been running smoothly. As of today, the number of the late blight *Phytophthora infestans* spores is well below the economic threshold. However, this situation may suddenly change for worse, and therefore we are on constant alert and working vigorously to supplement the morphological identification of *Phytophthora* spores with in-house molecular diagnostics. Not only we detect and quantify the spores, but plate them on a special culture medium in Petri dishes to isolate pure pathogen cultures. The latter allows us to monitor any genetic changes in *Phytophthora* population and to detect new, potentially more virulent genotypes in time. As for potato psyllids, it has been quiet on this front, although we see a number of other psyllid species on sticky cards. Because of the nature of their lifecycle, the potato psyllids are usually found in the second part of growing season. We thank all growers and volunteers who donate their time to collect and send us spore trap samples and insect cards.

We would like to introduce our new lab member, postdoctoral fellow Dr. Maria Munawar (photo to right). She has been working in the lab since May. Maria is originally from Pakistan, and she completed her Ph.D. in China studying plant parasitic

nematodes. In Lethbridge, her research focuses on *Fusarium* dry rot and molecular diagnostics of *Phytophthora infestans*. Because of Maria's unique expertise in nematodes, we have expanded her projects to include soil surveys to characterize the nematode species present in potato fields of Alberta. Using molecular diagnostics, we are now able to identify nematodes down to a species level rather than to a genus only, as it was before.



This study also contributes to the Canadian Potato Early Dying Network project, in which our lab represents the Province of Alberta. It should be noted that there is a lack of knowledge on nematodes in Alberta fields, especially those

contributing to potato diseases. By bringing nematode expertise, we intend to expand our knowledge and capability in this field.

Enjoy the beauty and warmth of mid-summer!

- Dmytro Yevtushenko, U of L Potato Chair

[thomas@albertapotatoes.ca](mailto:thomas@albertapotatoes.ca)  
403 892-7184



*Congratulations to U of L potato research student, Colby Robertson on receiving his Master of Science Degree and also being appointed to the newly created Canadian Agricultural Youth Council.*

Young Canadians are dynamic, engaged and passionate about the future of the agriculture and agri-food sector, and giving them a voice at the table is an important commitment of the Government of Canada.

As a consultative body to Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, the [Canadian Agricultural Youth Council \(CAYC\)](#) is a

group of young Canadians providing advice, enabling on-going dialogue on food-related challenges and opportunities, sharing information and best practices, and advising on the strengths and weaknesses of policies and programs affecting the agriculture and agri-food sectors.

On July 24, 2020, Agriculture and Agri-Food Minister Marie-Claude Bibeau announced the names of the 25 members chosen to sit at this table. They were selected from more than 800 applications received, representing a diverse mix of individuals from subsectors across the agriculture and agri-food sector, as well as from every province and the North. The Council will meet multiple times annually, with a virtual, inaugural meeting planned for August 2020.

Source: [agr.gc.ca](http://agr.gc.ca)

# Speak up for agriculture!

Compete  
to win up to  
\$1,000

Ages 11 to 24

## Enter the 2020 Alberta Young Speakers for Agriculture competition

We're looking for young Albertans who have the passion to speak up for agriculture. The Alberta Young Speakers for Agriculture competition will give you the opportunity to share your passion while developing skills in communications and leadership, and expanding your knowledge of the agriculture industry. And you'll do it completely online through a 5-7 minute video submission!

### 2020 Video Essay Topics

1. How can we fill the talent pipeline in Canadian agriculture?
2. What impact will the emerging micro-food processing industry have on agriculture?
3. Aquaculture: The challenges and solutions of developing, funding and marketing an emerging food source.
4. Climate change: Can the family farm manage and capitalize on this shift?
5. Lessons learned over the last 25 years of agriculture – and how we can apply it to the next 25.
6. Should the agriculture industry fund and support opportunities for youth development?
7. How to create ecosystem markets that reward Canada's farmers for environmental stewardship.



### Cash prizes – and more

#### Senior Competition (16-24)

- Champion \$1,000.00
- 1st Runner-up \$500.00
- 2nd Runner-up \$350.00
- Three Honourable Mentions \$150.00 each

#### Junior Competition (11-15)

- Champion \$500.00
- 1st Runner-up \$300.00
- 2nd Runner-up \$150.00

**ENTRIES DUE  
BY 11:59PM ON  
AUGUST 15, 2020**

# Speak up for agriculture!



Ages 11 to 24

### Audio Guidelines

**The audio must be clear and without echo, static or other excessive noise.**

- Pay attention to whether there is any echo while a contestant is speaking and work to remove any known echoes.
- Ensure the contestant is in a space without background noise.
- If contestants do not have microphones that can be on their bodies, ensure that the defined distance still allows their microphone to clearly record their voice. It is recommended that contestants conduct a sound check before recording their official submission.

### Camera Guidelines

**The camera must record clear audio and visual material.**

- If you do not have a camera that records in high definition, ensure the image is as clear as possible. Recordings from phones and tablets are permitted.
- Only single-camera setup is permitted; use of multiple camera angles is not allowed.
- All contestants must ensure their camera is secured on a stable surface (while a tripod is not required, it is a useful tool if available).
- It is okay to use your smart phone to record your video submission as well.

### Speaking Area Guidelines

**The entire speaking area must be visible throughout the recording.**

- This typically means that the stage/area on which the contestant is standing must be visible, along with the contestant's entire body.
- Set a distance that shows as much of the contestant as possible; if it is not possible to show the entire body, ensure that the camera is set so that the contestant's face is clearly seen.
- The contestant may not use any props or other visual aids including backdrops or camera filters.
- Recording should be done indoors, in a room with a neutral background.

### Video Editing Guidelines

- The contestants video may not be edited or updated after initial filming in any way. This includes titles and text boxes, dissolves, color corrections, editing for time or content etc. Videos that have been edited will be removed from the competition.

### Recording Submission Deadlines and Guidelines

- Email your submission to [albertayoungspeakers@gmail.com](mailto:albertayoungspeakers@gmail.com) by **11:59pm on August 15, 2020**.
- Submit your recording in an MP4 format.
- Video should be between 5 and 7 minutes maximum in length.

Email: [albertayoungspeakers@gmail.com](mailto:albertayoungspeakers@gmail.com) | Website: [www.albertayoungspeakers.com](http://www.albertayoungspeakers.com)

# COVID-19 and your farm this summer

Routine jobs now need a bit more preparation to prevent any potential spread of the virus to workers, visitors and family members.



“As Alberta farms go into the summer work season, there is little doubt that practices and procedures have changed to adjust for the ongoing threat of COVID-19,” says Kenda Lubeck, farm safety coordinator with Alberta Agriculture and Forestry. “Farms are encouraged to outline an exposure control plan for COVID-19.”

This plan should identify the specific health hazards on the farm and outlining responsibilities and risks associated with the operation. Implementing specific controls based on risk assessments will help each farm reduce its risk of COVID-19. Basic controls include:

Engineering controls such as barriers and partitions or increased ventilation.

Administrative controls that change the way workers, volunteers and family members interact. They should include policies for physical distancing, limiting hours of operations, respiratory etiquette and hand washing procedures.

Personal protective equipment (PPE) is generally only necessary when hazards related to COVID-19 cannot be completely eliminated by administrative and engineering controls. PPE controls the hazard at the worker, volunteer or family member level. Examples of PPE include gloves, eye protection, face protections and masks.

## COVID-19 related PPE

In addition to regular PPE required for specific tasks – grain or hay handling, cleaning, applying chemicals – workers can use masks and other face coverings to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

“It is important to note,” Lubeck adds, “that cloth face coverings are not considered an adequate PPE substitution for a respirator. If your farm task requires a respirator or a dust mask, make sure you are using the proper PPE for the situation.”

Cloth face coverings work to protect other people, not the wearer. These masks should be the last line of defense against coronavirus. However, they can help prevent the spread of COVID-19 when workers are required to do tasks

close to each other.

## Visitors and new workers

During the pandemic, farm visitors need to be safe from expected hazards like moving machinery, as well as exposure to the coronavirus. Follow the recommendations of Alberta Health Services to keep everyone safe and healthy. Develop and follow a visitor orientation covering all hazards, including COVID-19.

Lubeck says that in the case of new workers, it’s important to establish an orientation program to address all hazards, including COVID-19.

“This will help vulnerable workers, volunteers and family members avoid dangerous mistakes and learn new skills.”

## Tasks and transporting people

When it’s impossible to maintain the physical distancing between interconnected roles or close proximity teams – working with animals, equipment maintenance, or riding in vehicles together – farms may consider these options:

Assign people who already co-mingle as a ‘family group that live together’ to those interconnected roles or close proximity teams.

Outfit interconnected roles or close proximity teams with appropriate PPE whenever possible or reasonable.

Recommend individual users place all used PPE items in a pre-planned spot. Avoid unnecessary shaking or tossing of items that could cause COVID-19 droplets to shed, and place the item directly into the trash or washing machine. All potential COVID-19 exposed materials should be washed with hot water and soap that create suds to break down any virus droplets.

Follow best practices to create a policy on your farm for transportation. Those who live and work together should travel together, rather than travel with others from another family unit. Limit the number of people travelling in one vehicle. Disinfect surfaces often. Keep as much space between people as possible, cover any coughs or sneezes,



## PROVINCIAL NEWS

and if anyone is feeling unwell they should stay home. Create a transportation plan, train your workers and keep everyone safe.

### Tracing exposure

“As a farmer and employer, it’s up to you to make sure your employees, visitors and family members stay safe and healthy,” notes Lubeck, “Now with COVID-19, it is as important as ever.”

“Keep track of everyone that employees come into contact with during the busy season on the farm. That way if someone does become sick, the process of keeping the virus contained is simpler for health officials and farm managers. Create an exposure control plan and follow it.”

All Albertans can download and use the ABTraceTogether mobile contact tracing app on their smartphones to reduce risk of exposure and as added security to any plan.

While farmers and ranchers have many jobs and tasks outdoors, which reduces the risk of COVID-19 exposure, the risks of spreading the virus are very real in all work situations. The only way to control this disease is to be prepared.

For more information on mitigating the risks of COVID-19 in the agriculture industry, view page 3 of COVID-19 publications by industry. For regular updates on COVID-19 in Alberta, visit COVID-19 info for Albertans.

#### Contact

Connect with the Alberta Farm Safety Program:

Toll free: 310-FARM (3276)

Email: [farm.safety@gov.ab.ca](mailto:farm.safety@gov.ab.ca)

Source: [alberta.ca](http://alberta.ca)

**ALBERTA  
OPEN  
FARM DAYS**



**AUGUST 15 & 16TH**

**CP FARMS - BARNWELL  
AUGUST 15TH**

**10-5 pm  
visitors must pre-register**

[www.albertafarmdays.ca/host-farms/](http://www.albertafarmdays.ca/host-farms/)



**Celebrate #FoodDayCanada on August 1st by posting photos on social media of purchasing Canadian food from your local grocery store or farmers market, enjoying a favorite, locally-sourced dish at your favorite restaurant or standing in a field that you are growing to supply the Canadian food chain. You could win a \$100 gift card. Whatever it may be... let's all celebrate and put Canada on the menu!**

## FROM THE OFFICE



*Letter From APIA President, Russ Stewart Regarding the 2020 Alberta Potato Conference and APIA Tradeshow:*

*After much deliberation over the last couple of weeks, the Board of Directors of the APIA has unanimously voted to postpone our Annual Trade Show for November 2020. Our decision was not taken lightly and involved discussion with exhibitors, industry, and growers. Over the last thirty years or so, many relationships have been developed at the Alberta Potato Conference and APIA Trade Show. While every one of us would like to continue building on these relationships, we felt it was in the best interest to postpone until the following fall.*

*A large thank you is extended to all of our past exhibitors, industry members and to all growers for your patience and understanding.*

*If you have any questions or comments, I welcome you to contact me at 403-634-1336.*

*Respectfully,*

*Russ Stewart, Alberta Potato Industry Association*

### HERITAGE DAY IN ALBERTA TIMELINE

1976

● **The Birth of Servus Heritage Festival**

No fewer than 11 ethnic communities come together to hold the first Servus Heritage Festival, which becomes an annual fixture on Edmonton's calendar.

1974

● **Heritage Day is Announced**

Government of Alberta marks the first Monday of August as Heritage Day, meant to celebrate the cultural and historical heritage of the province.



1905

● **Alberta Becomes a Province**

Alberta gets its provincial status on September 1, 1905, along with Saskatchewan.

Please note: All  
2019/2020 PGA licenses  
will expire  
Friday July 31, 2020.

If you have not sent in  
your new 2020/2021  
license application  
form, please do so  
immediately.

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