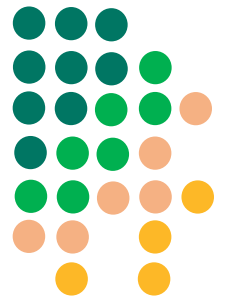


Agricultural Service Board



Annual Report 2020

The Wilderness is Our Back Yard

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Saddle Hills County

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The Wilderness is Our Back Yard



Overview



The Agricultural Service Board Annual Report summarises the activities of the Rural Development Program during 2020.

The year was a wet and hectic one in the department.

This report will serve to inform the Agricultural Service Board and Council on what activities occurred in 2020, including vegetation management, outreach activities, enforcement, contractor accomplishments and various other activities.

Five seasonal staff were hired, trained and assigned their various zones and duties in the County. Labourers worked on maintaining vegetation at the County Complex, various fire halls, ditches, tower sites, the Hamlet of Woking and other locations in the County when the weather permitted.

Saddle Hills County has a population of 2,225 according to the 2016 Census, which is a 2.8% decline from 2,288 in 2011. Of those 2,225 people, there are almost 800 resident farmers within our boundaries.

The County is 5,838.15 square kilometers in size with just under half being crown land, or green zone. There is approximately 477,820 cultivated acres and 184,330 uncultivated (bush pasture) acres in the County.

The County has a diversity within its agricultural community and is producing pulses, cereals, canola, legumes, and grass seeds as well as bison, elk, goats and sheep.

The most common livestock production is cattle with an estimated total size of ~ 17,000.



Agricultural Service Board

As per the Agricultural Service Board Act, each municipality may appoint individuals to act as an advisory body and assist Council and the Minister in matters of mutual concern.

Examples of activities the Agricultural Service Board (ASB) may participate in include: to advise, help organize and direct weed and pest control, oversee water conservation programs, and to aid in the control of animal disease under the Animal Health Act.

The Agricultural Service Board

and Council work together to protect viable and sustainable agriculture, to make it an economically viable venture for all producers and to develop policies that suit the mandate.

Section 4 of the Agricultural Service Board Act states: “A board must present a summary of its activities for the preceding year to the Council in a form acceptable to the Council containing the information required by Council.”

Saddle Hills County Agricultural Service Board consists of five members-at-large who are local

producers in the County.

In 2020, the board held six monthly meetings and attended the Provincial Agricultural Service Board Conference in Banff January 2020.

Members attended the Regional ASB Conference virtually on October 22nd, 2020.

The Agricultural Services Board and staff have attended a consultation meeting regarding the seed royalty program, CAP presentations and the a meeting regarding the de-regulation of *Fusarium Graminearum*.



SADDLE HILLS COUNTY AGRICULTURAL SERVICE BOARD 2020

(L-R): Mallory Kaiser (Member-at-large), Cheryl Brett (Member-at-large), Tyson Hessler (Member-at-large), Candace Dolen (Chair), Adam Fitzpatrick (Vice-Chair), Ken Titford (Councillor) and Ed Armagost (Councillor).

Saddle Hills County Agricultural Service Board consists of five public-at-large members and two Councillors. In 2020, public-at-large were: Candace Dolen (Chair), Adam Fitzpatrick (Vice-Chair), Cheryl Brett, Tyson Hessler, Jace Earl and Councillors Ed Armagost (Ward 1) and Ken Titford (Ward 4).

Operations

Vegetation Management

Herbicide Application

Roadside herbicide application was completed in-house with the spray truck, side-by-side sprayer and other various spray equipment. 1257 Hectares of the roadside ditch received a blanket spray with Navius Flex, a three-year residual broadleaf herbicide. In 2019, there were 1200 hectares of roadside sprayed, and 700 hectares in 2018.

Other various locations received a spot-spray to help control small infestations of noxious or prohibited noxious weeds and brush. Due to Covid cutbacks; no new Fence Line Agreements were signed or sprayed in 2020.

Bio-Control

In 2019, there were two separate releases of bio-control in the County. Both bio-controls are used for controlling Canada Thistle. A stem-mining weevil population was released at a small thistle infestation on County-owned infrastructure and a population of gall flies were also released.

The goal of the bio-control is to build up the population and then release them into our 'no spray' zones and environmental sensitive areas. In 2020 upon inspection, some of the bio control agents had survived the 2019 winter. Surveillance of these sites will continue.

Mowing

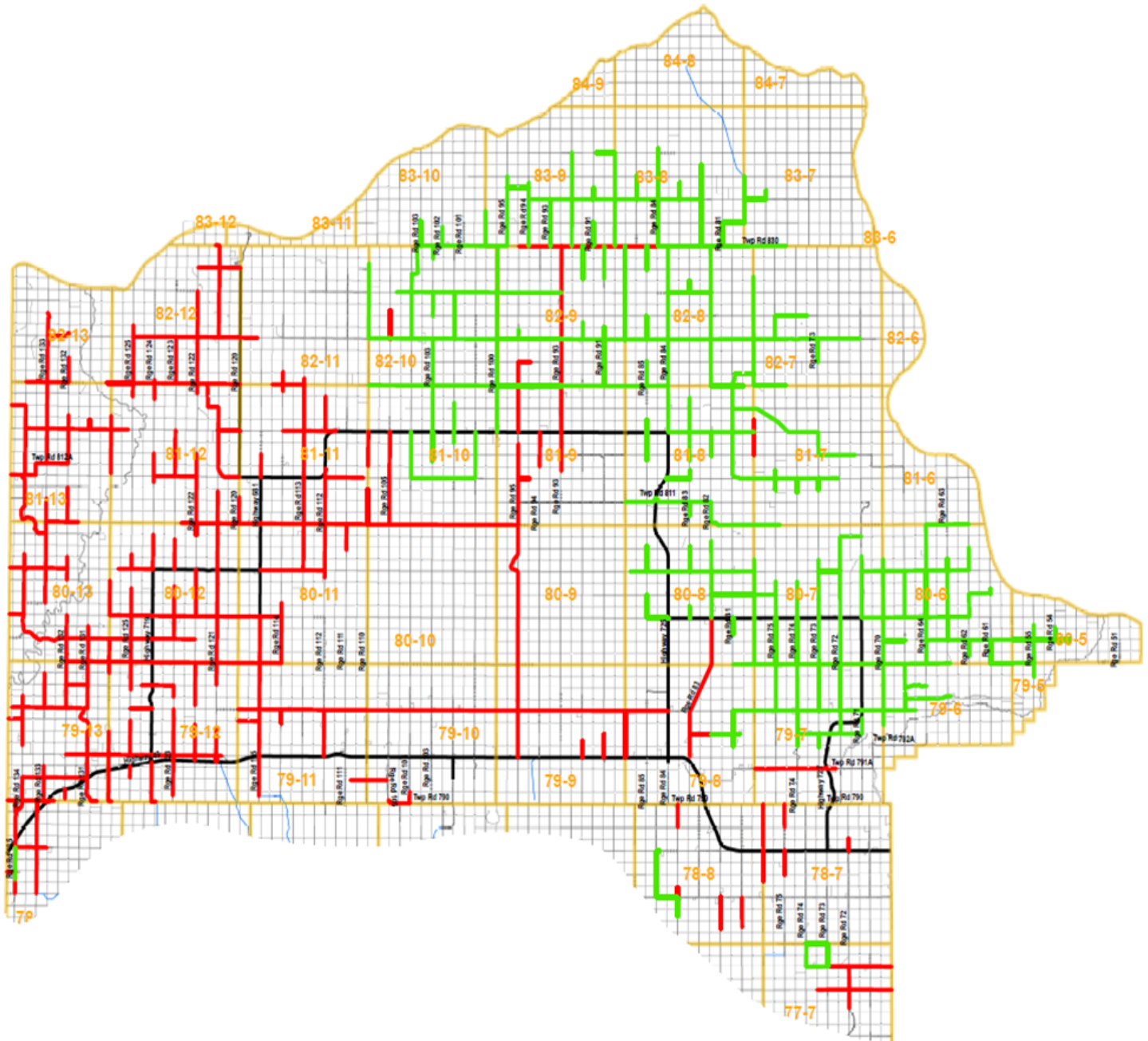
All roadsides within the County received a shoulder mow beginning mid-July by the contract mower. All arterial roads received a full right of way mow with additional mowing occurring on designated roads. Contractors finished up all the mowing of roadsides by mid August. All fire halls, water plants, tower sites, transfer stations, County Complex, the hamlet of Woking and various county owned infrastructure also got mowed in house throughout the summer months. 2020 was the final year for the Roadside Mowing Contract. A new contract has been awarded and signed for 2021-2023.



Operations

2020 Roadside Spry Map

Over 1200 ha of County Right-of-way had been sprayed again in 2020! Another great spray year for the department! Red indicates 2019 spray year, green indicates 2020 spray year.



Pest Inspections

Over 30 canola fields were inspected for Virulent Black leg and Clubroot this year, as per Policy AG15 & AG19. No clubroot was found and very low levels of virulent blackleg were found. 70 soil samples were also taken (two per agricultural township) and sent off as a Peace Region grant initiative under the CAP program for the presence of clubroot spores in the soil. All 70 soil samples came back with negative results.

Due to the removal of *Fusarium Graminearum* from the agricultural pest act, only five cereal fields were sampled and tested for *Fusarium Graminearum* with permission from the landowners. All five samples had no evidence of infection and came back with negative test results.

All canola and wheat inspections were chosen at random, and samples came from farms of all sizes and areas.



Bertha Armyworm Moths



Blackleg Symptoms

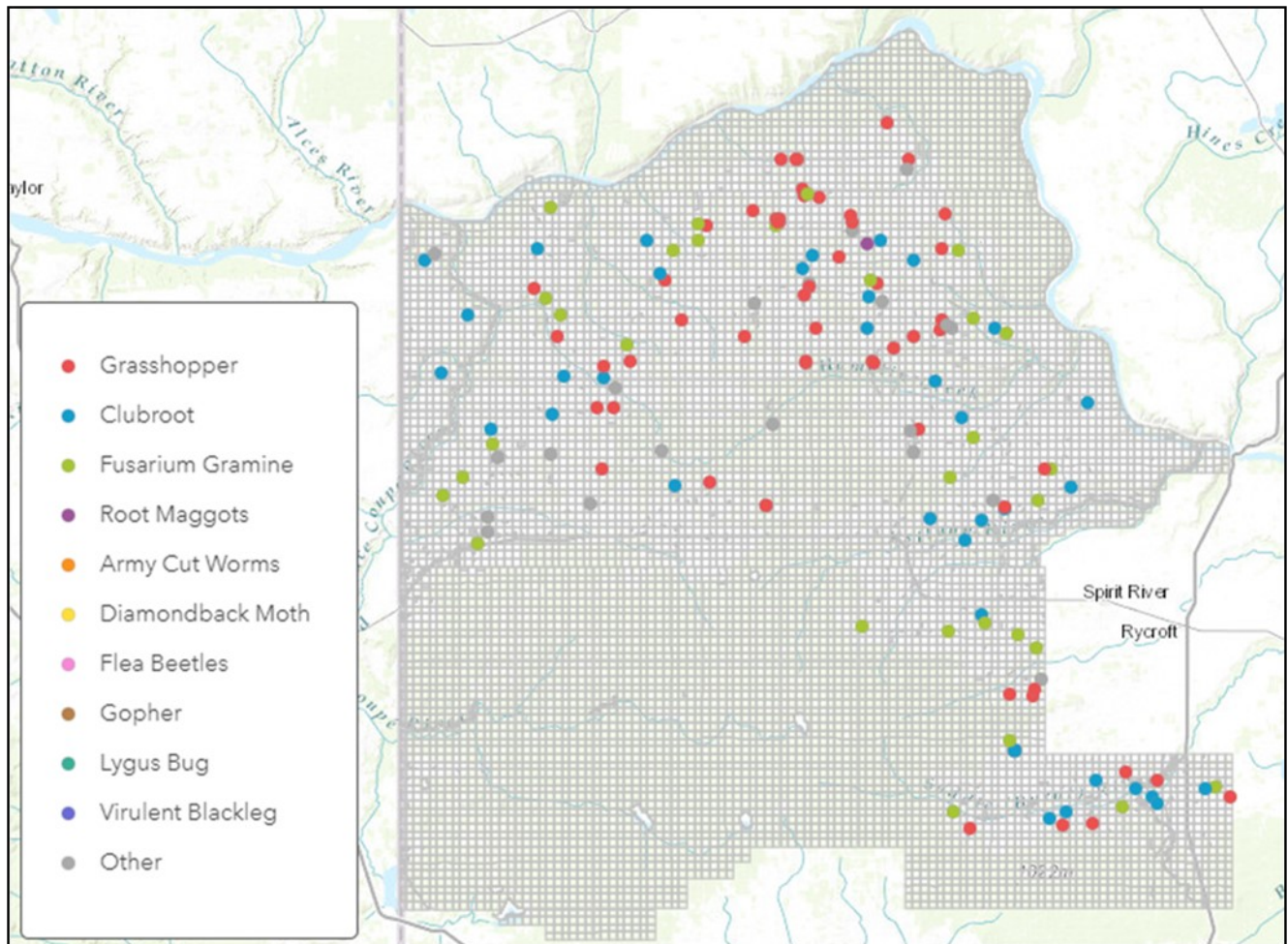
County staff also assisted Alberta Agriculture and Forestry throughout the summer with the provincial Pea Disease Survey and Grasshopper Survey. Pea disease levels were low at the time of the survey, although crop conditions were poor overall, and many fields did not live long enough to show symptoms of pea diseases. Grasshopper populations seemed to be at an all time low due to moisture.

Saddle Hills County had two Bertha Armyworm traps set up in 2020 (Fourth creek and bonanza). During late July, a large spike in Bertha Armyworm numbers were noticed in the Fourth Creek Trap. Saddle Hills continued to encourage producers to monitor all fields to ensure the economic threshold was reached before taking action.

Pest Inspections

2020 Pest Inspection Map

Pest Inspections for Saddle Hills County, 2020



Weed Inspections

Inspections

All five of the Rural Development seasonal employees were appointed as weed and pest inspectors in May of 2020.

Over 2,000 weed inspections occurred throughout the summer. 46 weed notices were issued from the inspections, down from 57 weed notices in 2019. Most weed notices were issued for Scentsless Chamomile and Orange Hawkweed.

For smaller infestations, staff would pick and control the weeds before issuing a notice and the Agricultural Fieldman would communicate with the landowners so they were aware of the infestation and could continue to monitor the situation throughout the season.

Staff has noticed a positive shift in cooperation with ratepayers regarding weed issues and concerns.



Enforcement

In 2020, four weed notices that were issued throughout the summer went to enforcement – two for Scentsless Chamomile, and two for Canada Thistle.

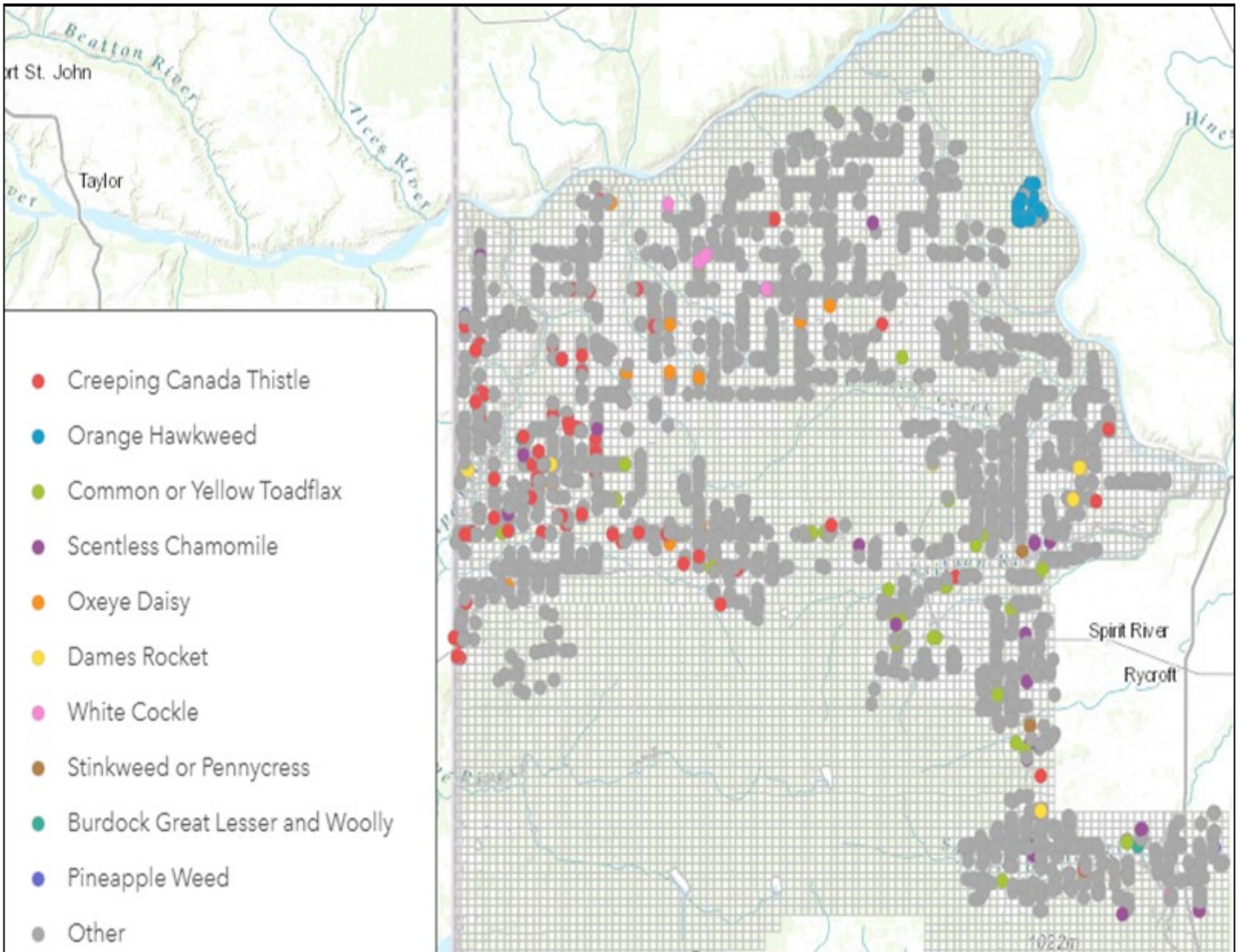
The two Canada Thistle enforcement's occurred on an abandoned wellsite area in the cotillion area. These scenarios will be a growing and ongoing issue within the county, therefore staff and the ASB will discuss and work together on implementing a strategy for the future.

There are re-occurring enforcements for Scentsless Chamomile in the County for the past five years that staff are trying to encourage compliance with.

Weed Inspections

2020 Weed Inspection Map

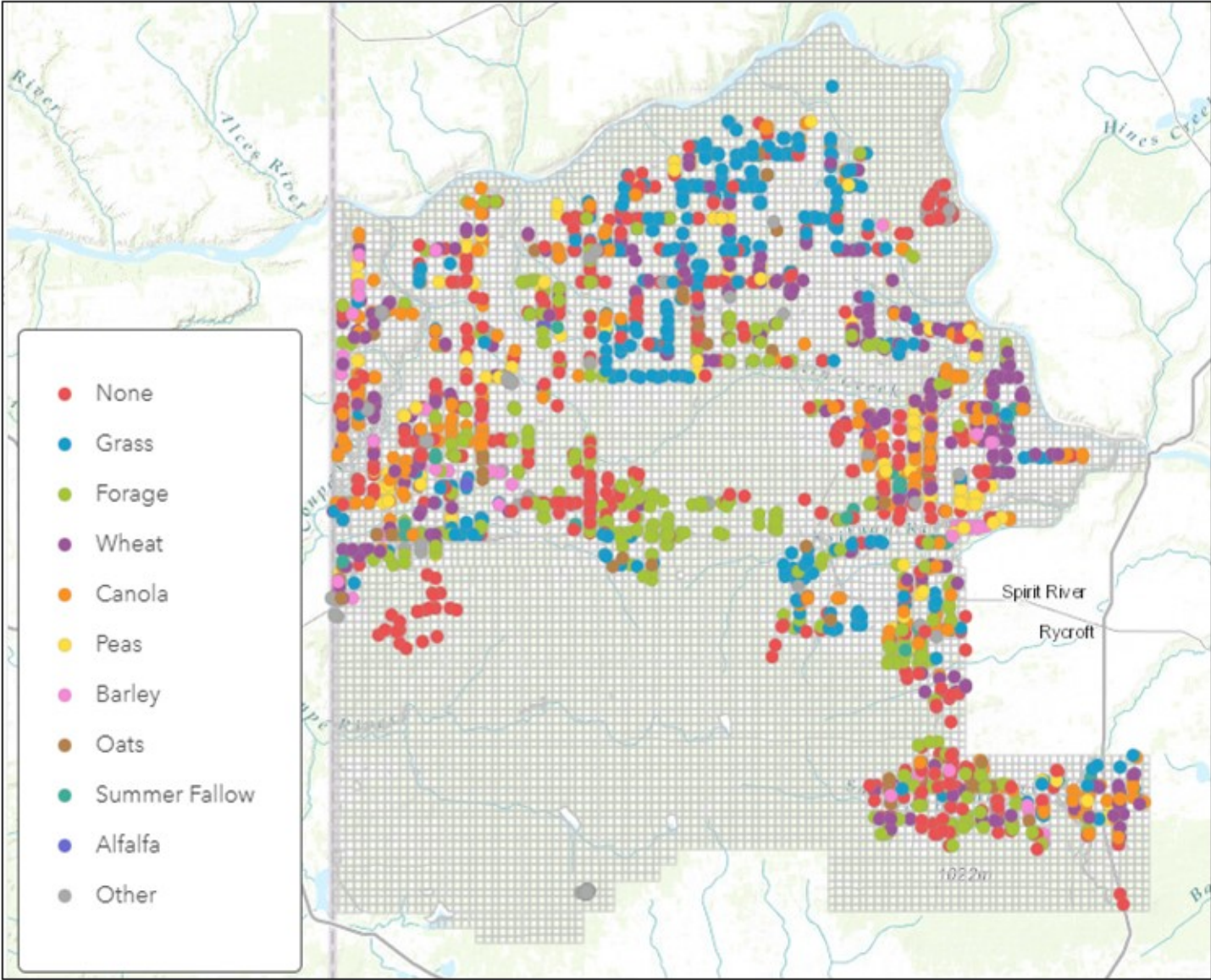
Weed Inspections for Saddle Hills County, 2020



Crop Lands

2020 Crop Lands Map

Crop Lands for Saddle Hills County, 2020



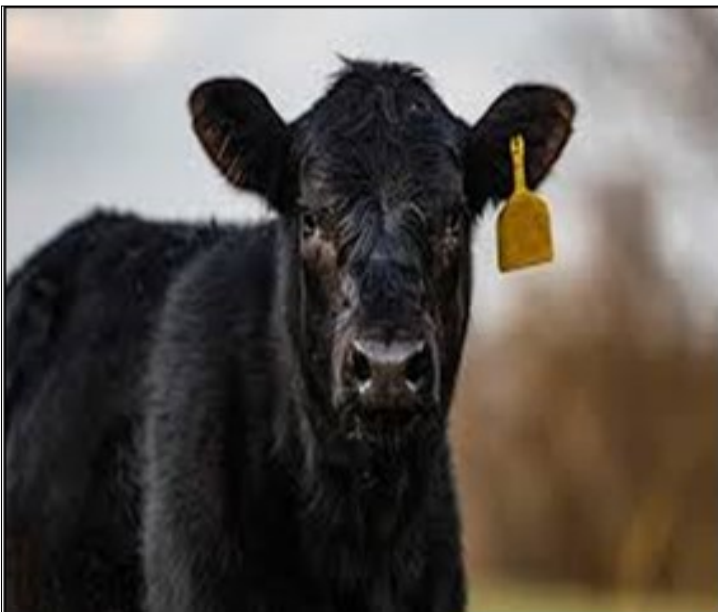
Livestock

V.S.J.

In 2020 to date, there were six new V.S.I (Veterinarian Services Incorporated) numbers given out to Saddle Hills County ratepayers. An increase in members assists in the longevity of the program within the Peace Country.

There were no new updates to the schedule fees for the V.S.I. program and that will be sent out in early 2021 with tax statements. Saddle Hills County has a cost share agreement of 50/50 on qualifying livestock vet services.

The majority of producers in Saddle Hills County source veterinary services out of Dawson Creek with some producers sourcing out of Fairview and Grande Prairie.



Predations Issues

Reports to the County on predator issues within the boundaries increased drastically in 2020—particularly regarding coyote predation. With increased coyote predation there was an increase in the issuance of 1080 tablets over the year.

42 Tablets were given out in 2020, 18 tablets were issued in 2019, and 18 tablets in 2018 as well. Predation issues involved both cattle and sheep producers.

The majority of the issues were located in the Gordondale, Ksituan, Woking and Cotillion areas. In most of these coyote predation sites, good fencing, livestock guardian animals and proper livestock management techniques are being utilized.



Outreach and Education

Market Outlook Evening

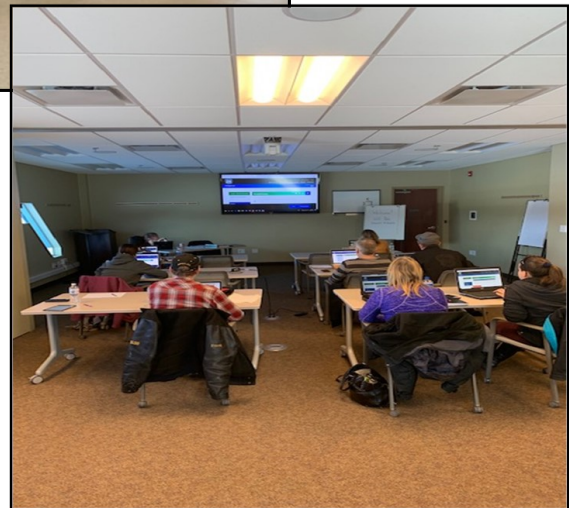
On February 25, 2020 an Agricultural Producers supper was held at the Savanna Rec plex. Neil Blue from Alberta Agriculture and Forestry was in attendance to give an update on the grain, pulse and oilseeds market. Brian Perillat from Canfax was in attendance to talk about cattle price's throughout North America and some trends to follow and keep an eye on throughout 2020. The event was well attended with over 20 producers from within the area.

Environmental Farm Plan Workshop

On February 26, 2020 Saddle Hills County co-hosted with Peace Country Beef and Forage Association on an Environmental Farm Plan Workshop. Seven Producers from the area made there way to the county office, and got started on there environmental farm plans.



Market Outlook Evening



Environmental Farm Plan Workshop

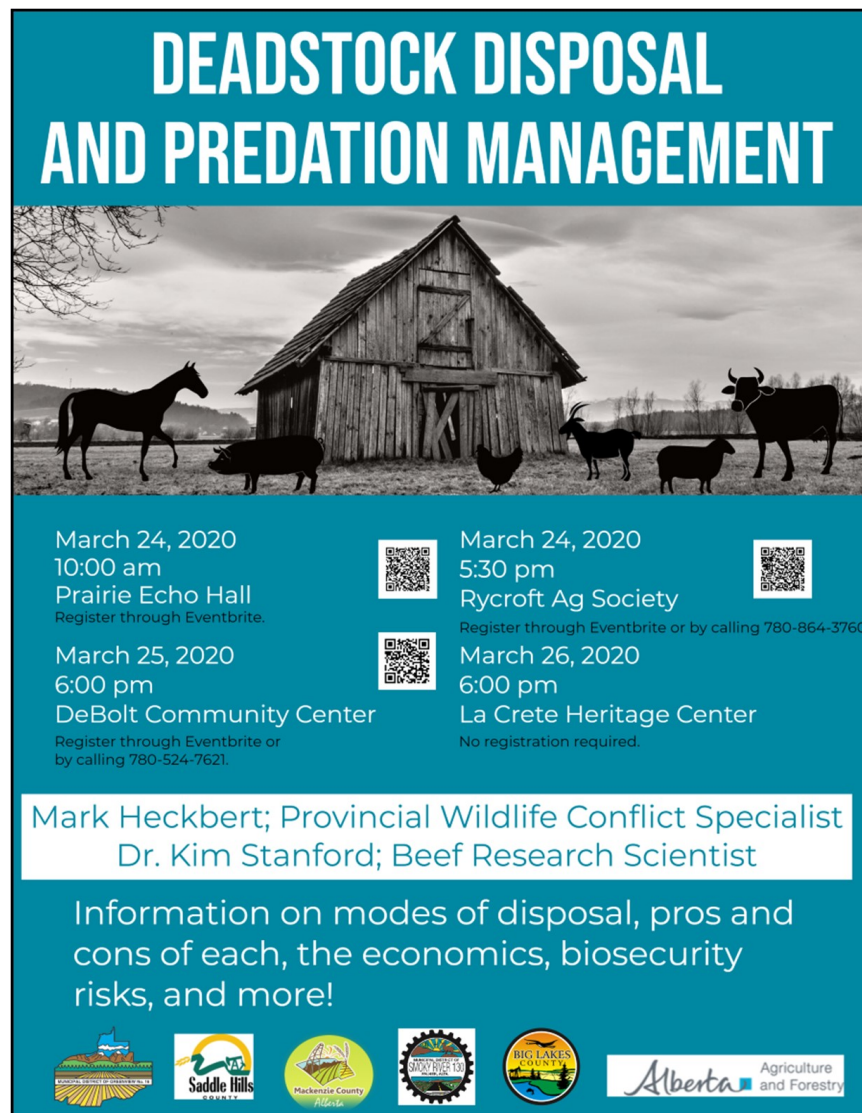
Outreach and Education

Classroom Ag Program

On March 11, 2020, Saddle Hills County Rural Development staff conducted a Classroom Ag presentation at the Bonanza School for grade four children. Staff focused the presentation on agriculture in different parts of the world, and what foods and crops are grown in different countries.

Deadstock Predation & Predation Management

On March 24, 2020 Saddle Hills County co-hosted with Big Lakes County, MD of Greenview, MD of Smoky River and Mackenzie County on a virtual deadstock workshop. Attendance was well received, considering this was the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic. Speakers included Mark Heckbert and Dr. Kim Stanford.



**DEADSTOCK DISPOSAL
AND PREDATION MANAGEMENT**

March 24, 2020
10:00 am
Prairie Echo Hall
Register through Eventbrite.


March 25, 2020
6:00 pm
DeBolt Community Center
Register through Eventbrite or
by calling 780-524-7621.

March 24, 2020
5:30 pm
Rycroft Ag Society
Register through Eventbrite or by calling 780-864-3760.

March 26, 2020
6:00 pm
La Crete Heritage Center
No registration required.

Mark Heckbert; Provincial Wildlife Conflict Specialist
Dr. Kim Stanford; Beef Research Scientist

Information on modes of disposal, pros and cons of each, the economics, biosecurity risks, and more!

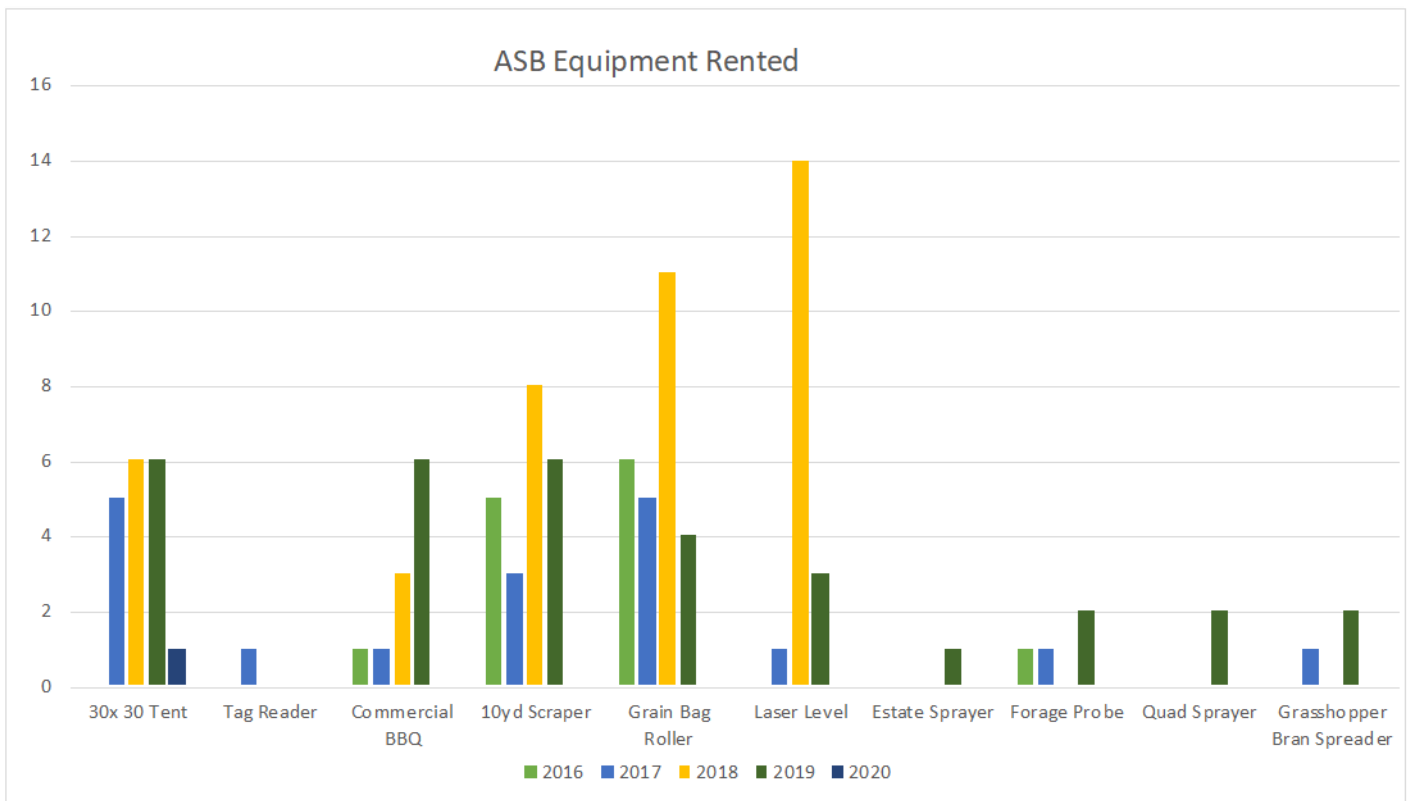


Rental Equipment

In 2020, the only update to the rental fleet was an upgraded forage probe, which is now a unit that can be ran by an electric drill.

This makes collecting a forage sample more efficient and accurate for ratepayers. Due to COVID -19, It was a slow year regarding the rental of most equipment in the fleet.

The most popular item on the rental fleet for 2020 was the new forage probe, which was rented four times. But items such as the 10-yard scraper, grain bag roller and BBQ trailer continue to be popular rental items.



2020 Highlights



2020 Highlights



Conclusion - Recommendations

For 2021

A large focus for 2020 was the management of weeds on summer fallowed acres, or fields that experienced very poor yield due to excesses moisture early in the growing season.

Excess moisture in June of 2020 made early herbicide applications and control of seedlings/ small weeds very difficult.

It was not until the ground dried out later into July that regular herbicide applications could begin. This made weed control difficult throughout different areas.

Going forward, work needs to continue on improving ratepayer interactions in regards to various aspects of the agricultural programs

such as weeds and pests.

In 2019, there was a focus on ratepayers with weed issues having conversations and discussions with the Agricultural Coordinator and Agricultural Foreman verses the weed inspectors to create that consistency in communication.

In 2020, more focus will need to be put on enforcing problem weed issues early in the spring when spray applications are more feasible.

This should help reduce the likeliness that large infestations will need to be picked. With the recent submission to the Canadian Agricultural Partnership program for funding for an Emergency Management Plan, 2020 will be a

big year on developing the emergency management plan for livestock in the County and the Central Peace.

Another focus for the Rural Development Department will be finding ways to connect with the producers in the County regarding Agriculture.

Potential opportunities would be taking over the County's twitter account during seeding, spraying and harvest when majority of the Agricultural Community is active along with what we are hearing and seeing in the field that will be shared on social media through various platforms.

Thank You

Dessa Nicholson, Agricultural Coordinator

Riley Nooy, Agricultural Foreman

2020 Financial Statements

Rural Development

	2020 Total Budget	Remaining in the Budget	Budget Used
ASB Administration Expense	\$ 395,802.37	\$ (66,004.37)	117%
ASB Board Expense	\$ 34,200.00	\$ 14,130.07	59%
Animal Industry Expense	\$ 88,500.00	\$ 2,722.86	97%
ASB Extension Expense	\$ 35,500.00	\$ 5,223.77	85%
Plant Industry Expense	\$ 648,900.00	\$ 114,822.25	82%

Unaudited Financial Statements as of December 30th, 2020



The Wilderness is Our Back Yard

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