



# Agricultural Service Board

# 2019 Annual Report



Photo: Riley Nooy

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# OVERVIEW

The Agricultural Service Board Annual Report summarizes the activities of the Rural Development Program during the 2019 year. 2019 was a wet, busy and exciting year in the Department. In 2019, we approached weed inspections differently to shift the perception of weed inspectors to more positive positions.

In May, Saddle Hills County hired Riley Nooy as the new Agricultural Foreman to assist with the deliverance of the ASB program. Riley comes from a farming background and had previously worked at another Municipality as the Agricultural Fieldman.

All seasonal staff were hired, trained and assigned their various zones and duties in the County. Laborers worked on maintaining vegetation at the County Complex, various fire halls, ditches, tower sites, the hamlet of Woking and other locations in the County.

This report will serve to inform the Agricultural Service



Board and Council what activities occurred in 2019, including vegetation management, outreach activities, enforcement, contractor accomplishments and various other activities.

Saddle Hills County has a population of 2225 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, as well as bison, elk, goats and sheep. The most common stock production is with a mated size of ~ 17,000.



# AGRICULTURAL SERVICE BOARD

As per the *Agriculture 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. 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 are all examples of activities the Agricultural Service Board may participate in. The Agriculture Service Board (ASB) 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 5 members-at-large who are local producers in the County. In 2019, held six monthly meetings, attended the

Provincial Agricultural Service Board Conference in Calgary January 2019. Members attended and the Regional ASB Conference at the St. Isadore Cultural Centre on October 29, 2019. The Agricultural Services Board and staff have attended a consultation meeting regarding the seed royalty program, CAP presentations.

Saddle Hills County Agricultural Service Board consists of 5 public-at-large members and 2 Councillors. In 2019, public-at-large were: Candace Dolen (Chair), Adam Fitz-



**FIGURE 1: SADDLE HILLS COUNTY AGRICULTURAL SERVICE BOARD 2019-2020**



# 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. Over 1200 Hectares of the roadside ditch received a blanket spray with Navius, a three year residual broadleaf herbicide. In 2018 there was 700 hectares of roadside that got sprayed. Many other various locations received a spot spray to help control small infestations of noxious or prohibited noxious weeds along with brush. Over



### Bio – Control

This year, there were 2 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 at some county owned infrastructure and a population of gall flies were also released. The goal behind the bio-control is to build up the population and then release them into our “no spray” zones and environmental sensitive areas. These are areas that are difficult to chem-



### Mowing

All roadsides within the County received a shoulder mow beginning Mid July. All arterial roads received a full right of way mow with additional mowing occurring on designated roads. Due to on-going moisture conditions, mowing took longer than normal. Contractors finished up all the mowing of roadsides by early September. All fire halls, water plants, tower sites, transfer stations, County Complex, the hamlet of Woking and various county owned infrastructure also got

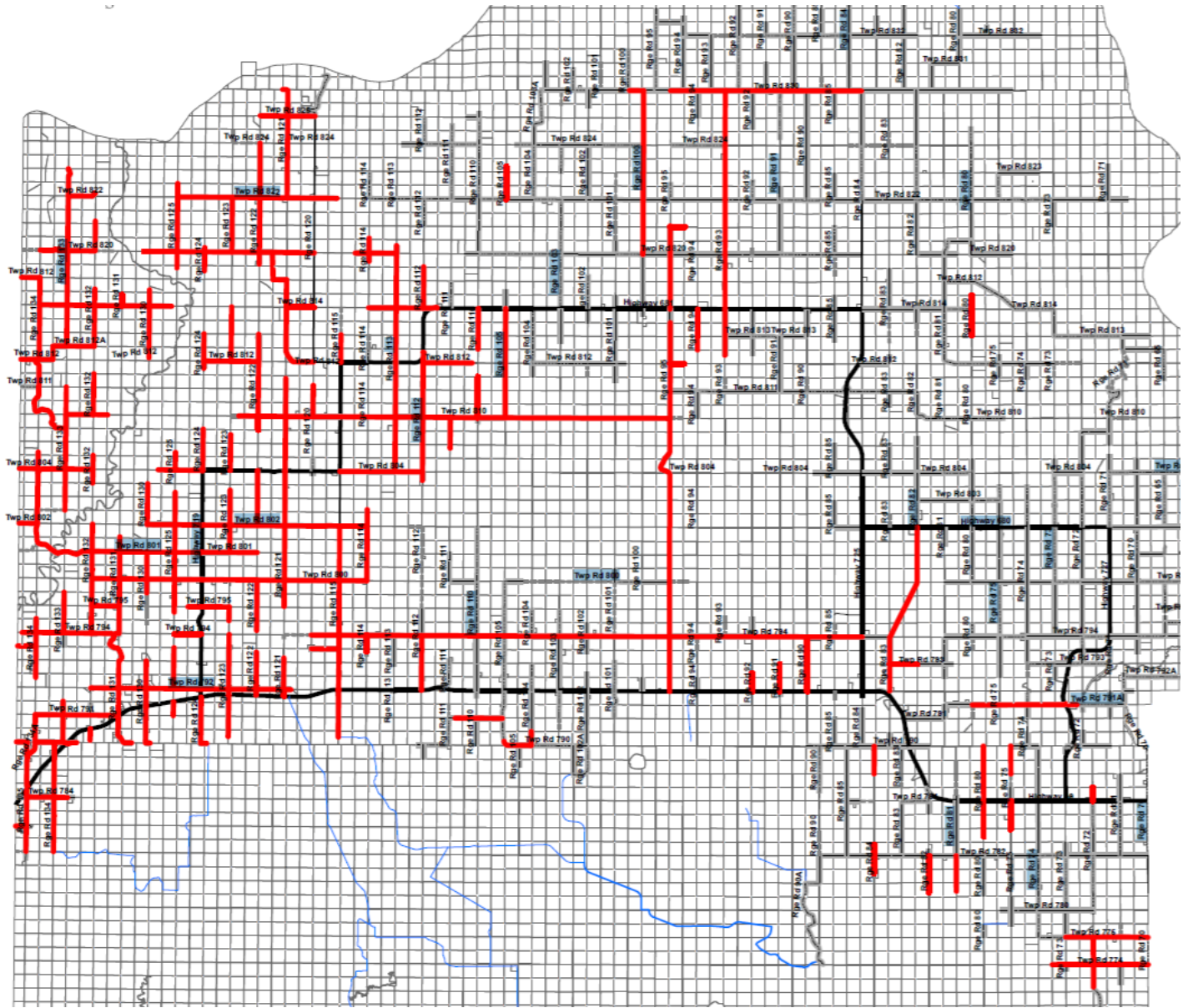




# Operations

## 2019 Roadside Spray Map

Over 1200 ha of County Right-of-way had been sprayed in 2019!





## 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. 40 soil samples were also taken (1 per agricultural township) and sent off as a Peace Region grant initiative under the CAP program for the presence of canola spores in the soil. All 40 soil samples came back negative.

25 cereal fields were sampled and tested for *Fusarium Graminearum* as per policy AG16. All 25 samples had no evidence of infection and also came back negative.

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



Pea Nodules—Fourth Creek



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, when it was still fairly dry in the area. Grasshoppers Surveys showed very high populations of Bruner grasshoppers throughout the County even with the high moisture conditions we experienced later in the summer. In-field reports and inspections revealed that the extremely high population of grasshoppers had a minimal impact to crops and pastures overall, but damage was evident.

During the month of August, a large spike in Bertha Armyworm numbers were noticed. Saddle Hills continued to encourage producers to monitor fields to ensure the economic threshold was reached before taking action.



# Pest Inspections

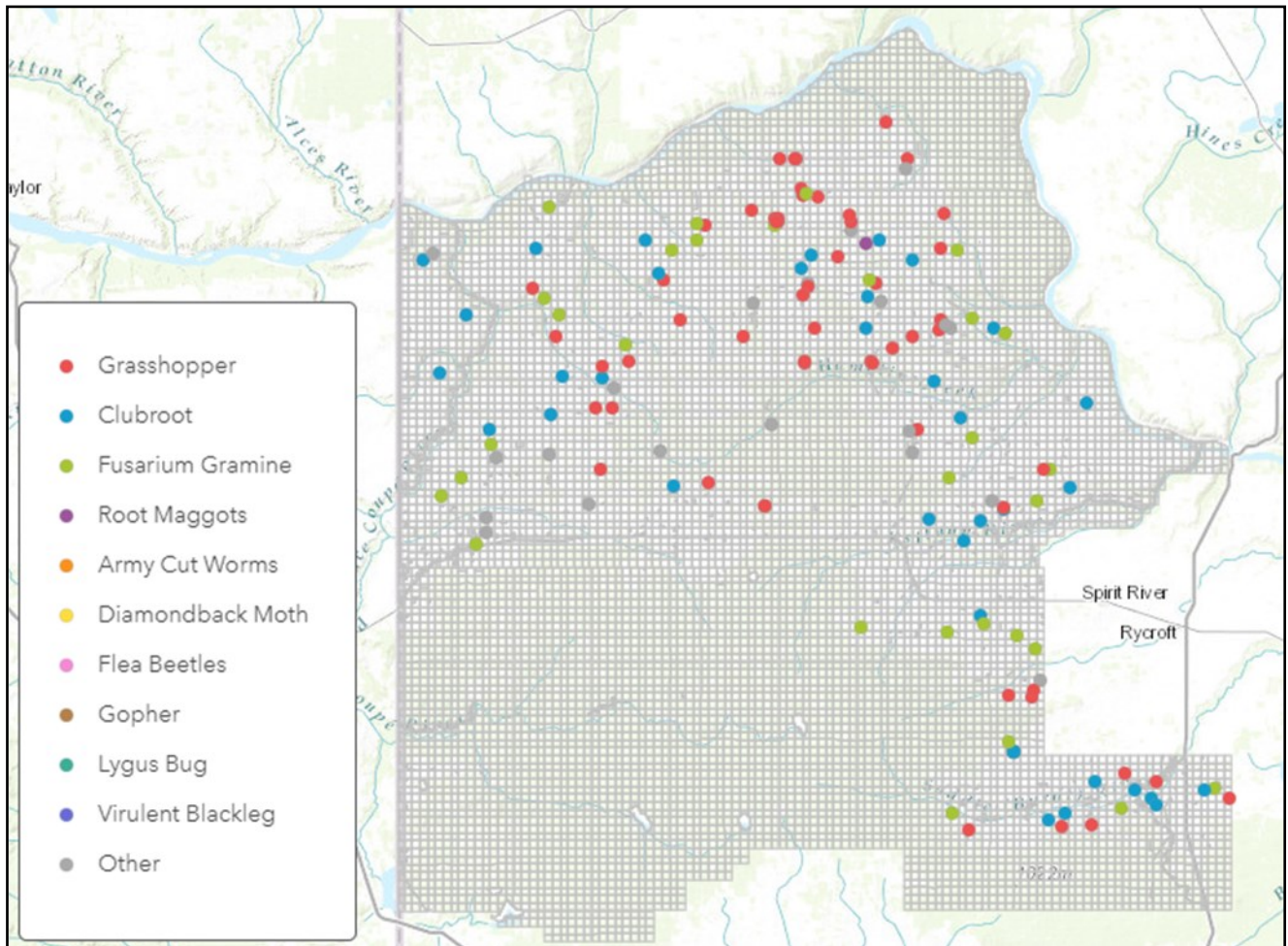


Figure 1: Pest Inspections for Saddle Hills County, 2019

## Weed Inspections

All seven of the Rural Development seasonal employees were appointed as weed and pest inspectors in April of 2019.

Over 1300 weed inspections occurred throughout the summer. 57 weed notices were issued from the inspections, down from 82 weed notices in 2018. Most weed notices were issued for Scentless Chamomile and Orange Hawkweed.

For smaller infestations, staff would pick and control the weeds before issuing a notice and the Ag Coordinator or Ag Foreman would communicate with the landowners so they were aware of the infestation and could continue to monitor the situation.

There has been a slight shift in cooperation with ratepayers regarding weed issues and concerns.



Yellow Toadflax



Orange Hawkweed

## Enforcement

In 2019, three Notices that were issued throughout the summer were enforced— one for Scentless Chamomile, one for Orange Hawkweed and one for Toadflax.

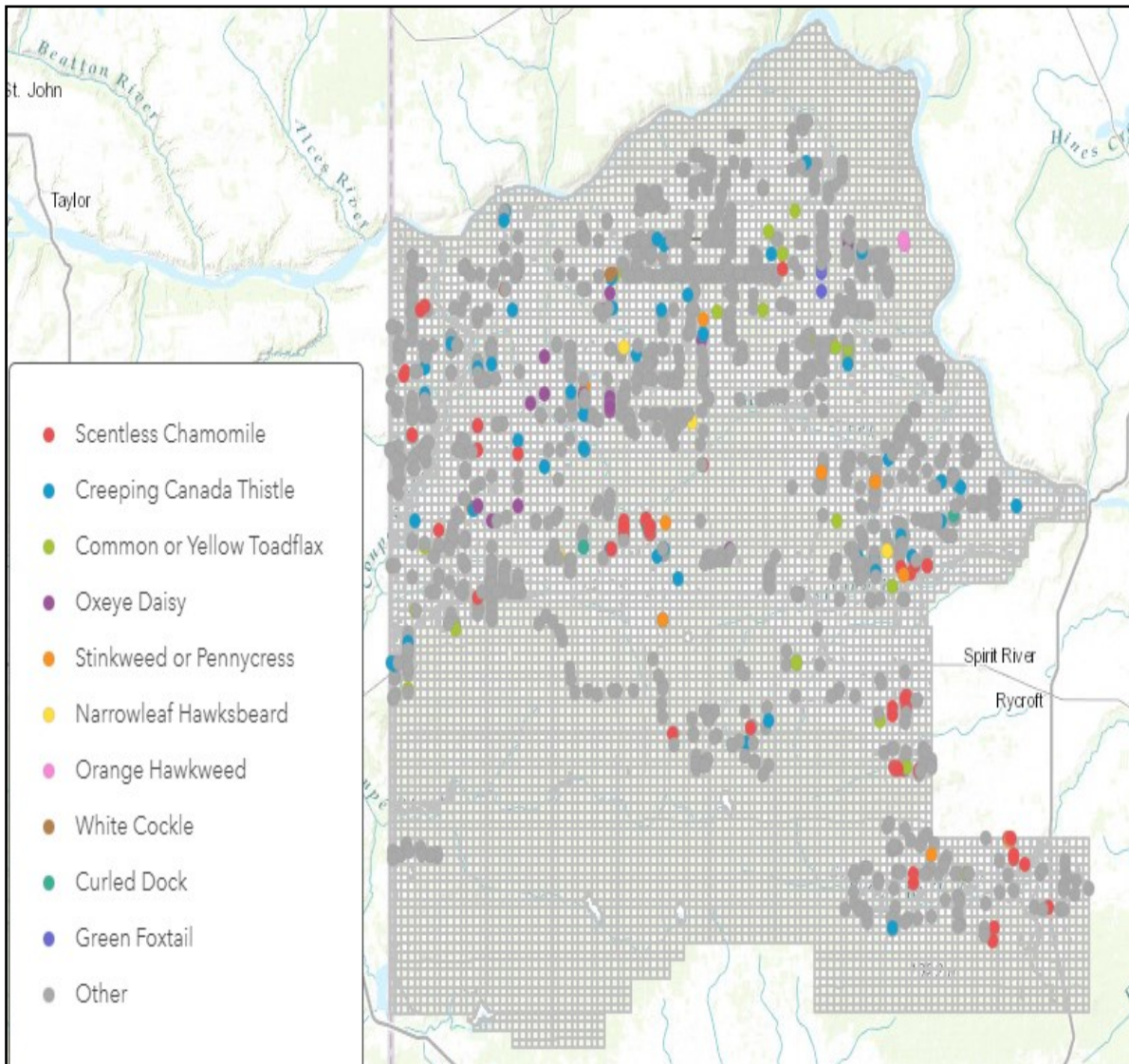
One enforcement was in the Fourth Creek gravel pit area, and debt recovery is currently ongoing.

The other enforcement was for Yellow Toadflax along highway 727 and debt recovery from that enforcement has been successful.

There are re-occurring enforcements for Scentless Chamomile in the County for the past 4 years that we are trying to encourage compliance with.



# Weed Inspections



**Figure 2: Weed Inspections for Saddle Hills County, 2019**

# Crop Lands 2019

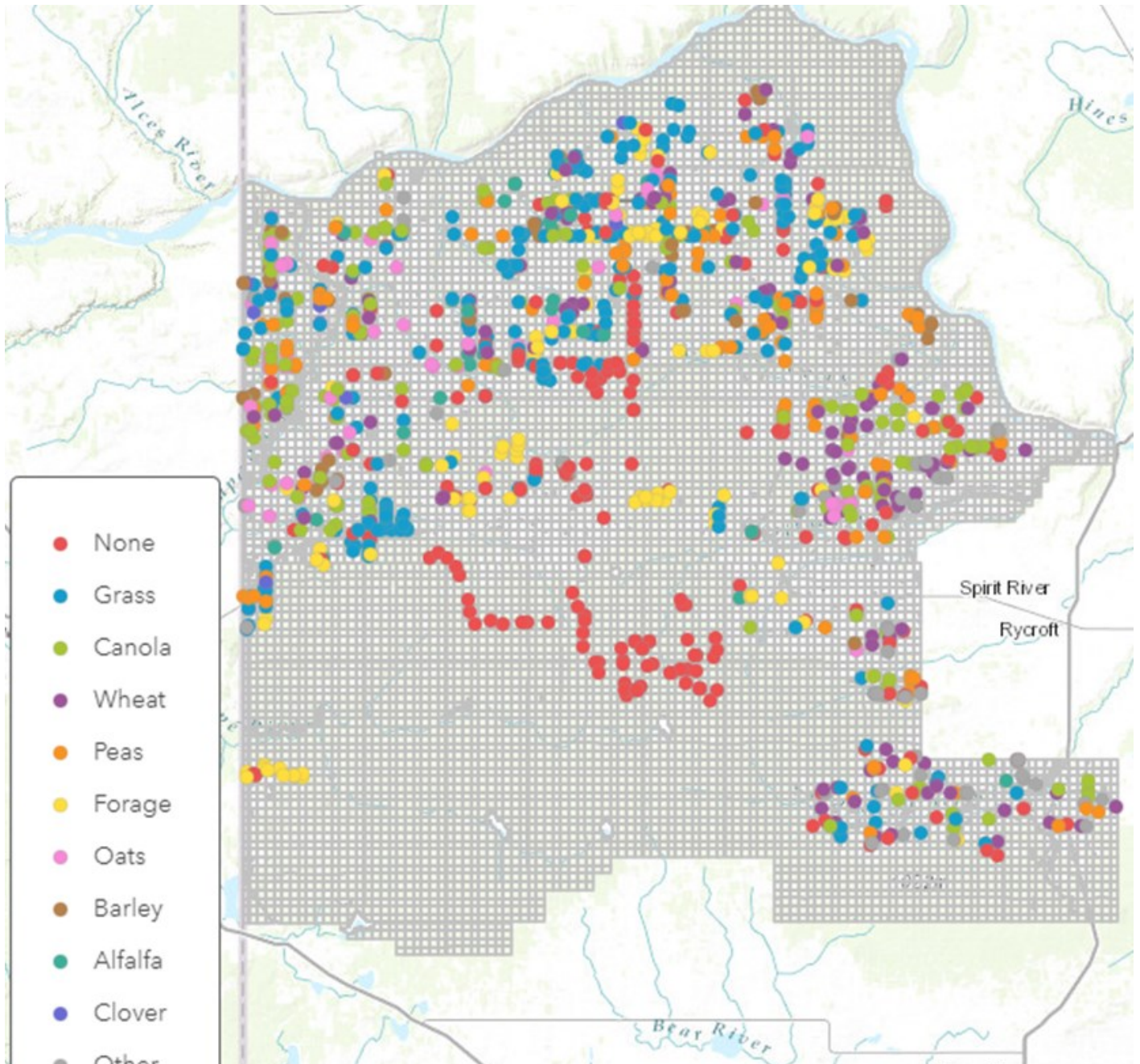


Figure 3: Overview of Crop Lands in Saddle Hills County, 2019



# Livestock

## V.S.I

In 2019 to date, there has been 7 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 has been a few new updates to the schedule fees for the V.S.I. program that will be sent out in early 2020 with tax statements. Saddle Hills County has a cost share agreement of 50/50 on qualifying livestock vet services. Majority of producers in Saddle Hills County source veterinary services out of Dawson Creek with some producers sour-



## Predation Issues

Reports to the County on predator issues within the boundaries have slightly increased in 2019—particularly regarding coyote predation. With increased coyote predation there was an increase in the issuance of 1080 tablets for the last few years. 18 tablets were issued to 3 different producers in 2019, and in 2018, 18 tablets were also issued to three producers. Predation issues involved both cattle and sheep producers. Majority of the issues were located in the Gordondale, Bonanza and Cottillion areas.



# Outreach and Education

## Agricultural Producer Supper Meeting

On March 1st, 2019 an Agricultural Producers supper was held at the Savanna Rec Plex. Mike Hittinger from Alberta Agriculture and Forestry was in attendance to give an update on the CAP program and funding opportunities that exist through the current program. The event was well attended with over 40 producers from within the area.



March 1, 2019 5:30pm at Savanna Rec Plex

Presentation will begin at 5:30pm, with supper to follow.

Please Pre-register by February 21, 2019:

Email or Call Dessa/Emily:  
(780) 864-3760 or [Ag@saddlehills.ab.ca](mailto:Ag@saddlehills.ab.ca)



## Spray Workshop

On August 9th, 2019 Saddle Hills County co-hosted Dr. Tom Wolf from Agrimetrix for a sprayer workshop at Cotillion Hall. With an attendance of 14 people, Dr. Wolf went over proper nozzle sizing, speeds and spray patterns for different application needs within the peace country. Tom encouraged attendees to try different sprayer setups to increase efficiency and effectiveness throughout the busy spray season on their own operations. His knowledge in the spray industry is very vast, and he was available to answer all questions from attendees. The workshop ran for about 5 hours.

A poster for a Spray Workshop. The top part shows a tractor in a field. The text reads: "AUGUST 9, 2019 SPRAY WORKSHOP WITH TOM WOLF", "Saddle Hills County Agricultural Service Board in Partnership with Bonanza Agricultural Society &amp; Savanna Agricultural Society", "Join Tom Wolf from Agrimetrix for a spray workshop in Cotillion". Topics include: Spray drift, Pesticide Efficacy, Sprayer Tank Cleanout. Course will run from 8:30 a.m. - 1:00pm rain or shine, beginning at the Cotillion Hall. Lunch provided. Please pre-register and pre-pay the \$50.00 registration fee by August 7th. Call (780) 864-3760 to register with Dessa, Riley, or Emily. On the right side, a blue box contains: "\$50.00 per person - lunch provided", "Pre-registration and pre-payment required by August 7, 2019", "Workshop runs from 8:30am-1:00p.m.", "Meet at the Cotillion Hall", "Saddle Hills COUNTY logo", "SADDLE HILLS COUNTY RR 1 Spirit River AB T0A 3G0 (780) 864-3760 saddlehills.ab.ca".



# Gundy ASB Open House

On June 6th, 2019 County staff hosted a BBQ and mini open house in Gundy. It was a great time for residents to learn about the fence line spray agreements, rental equipment, VSI program, noxious and prohibited noxious weeds and much more. Representation from Public Works and communications were also on hand to answer any questions.



# Kid's Ag Innovation Fair

On August 24th, 2019 Saddle Hills County hosted a Kids Ag innovation Fair at the county complex. 14 children registered projects for the contest with 6 participants and over 30 people showed up to check out the festivities. Games and activities included pedal car races, grain sand box, glittery tattoos, bouncy castle, di-no-rama and a BBQ lunch. The grand champion winner of the contest was Otto Fitzpatrick and his manure combine.



Figure 1: Overall Winner, Otto Fitzpatrick with Deputy Reeve Smith and Councillor Fitzsimmons



Figure 2: Winner with judges Paul Pike, Jill Henry and Rebecca Newman



# Kid's Ag Innovation Fair





# Livestock Health Workshop

On November 29th, 2019 Saddle Hills County hosted a Livestock Health Workshop at Blueberry Hall.

The focus of the workshop was Herd Health, Wildlife diseases that are transferable to livestock and nutritional rule of thumb.

Dr. Carmen Schneider from Dawson Creek Veterinary Clinic, Dr. Dayna Goldsmith (Anatomic Pathology) from the University of Calgary and Katie McLachlan from Peace Country Beef and Forage Association presented.

We had a great turn out with over 51 producers attending!



**Livestock Health Workshop**

**November 29, 2019—Blueberry Hall**

Time: 5:30 pm—8:30 pm



**Speakers:**

**Dr. Carmen Schneider** (Dawson Creek Veterinary Clinic) — Herd Health and Vaccines  
**Dr. Dayna Goldsmith** (University of Calgary) — Wildlife Diseases and Livestock  
**Peace Country Beef and Forage Association** — Nutritional Rule of Thumb

**The event is free but registration is required; supper provided!**

To Register please contact Saddle Hills County: (780) 864 - 3760 or [ag@saddlehills.ab.ca](mailto:ag@saddlehills.ab.ca) or PCBFA: (780) 835 - 6799 or [info@pcbfa.ca](mailto:info@pcbfa.ca)

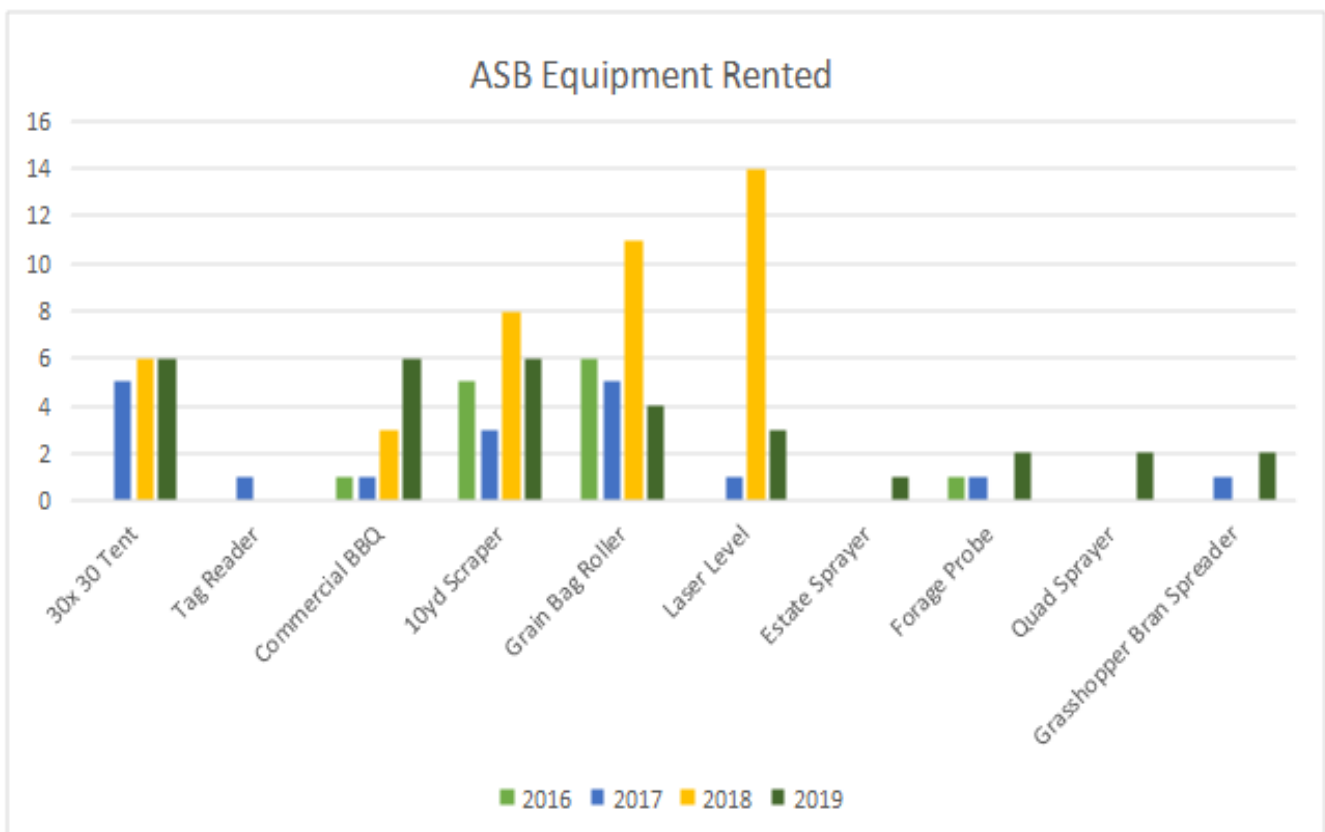




# Rental Equipment

In 2019, A roller crimper and estate sprayer were added to the Saddle Hills County rental fleet. The roller crimper was added to the fleet to assist in weed control and the creation of green manure for farmers and as an additional resource for organic producers to manage weeds.

The estate sprayer was added to assist in weed control on private lands and in yards, where a large sprayer cannot access and is too big of a job for a backpack. The most popular item on the rental fleet for 2019 was the BBQ trailer, being rented 8 times, but items such as the 30x30 tent, 10 yard scraper, and grain bag roller continue to be popular rental items.





# 2019 Highlights





# 2019 Highlights





# 2019 Highlights





# Conclusion and Recommendations for 2020

A focus for 2019 was the management of weeds in areas that are restricted to no spray zones such as: water plants and drainage ditches through the use of mechanical control, grass competition and use of bio-control agents. Two bio-control agents for Canada Thistle in two different locations were released in 2019— 2020 there will be a focus on monitoring the effects of these control agents on the weed populations. Rural Development has been tentatively approved to purchase a hydro seeder in 2020 which will aid in establishing competitive grass stands in areas of high weed pressure.

Going forward, work needs to continue on improving ratepayer interactions in regards to various aspects of the agricultural programs such as weeds and pests. 2019, there was a focus on ratepayers with weed issues having conversations and discussions with the Agricultural Coordinator and Agricultural Foreman versus 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 Saddle Hills 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 shared on social media through various forms.

Thank you for your continued support,

Dessa Nicholson, Agricultural Coordinator

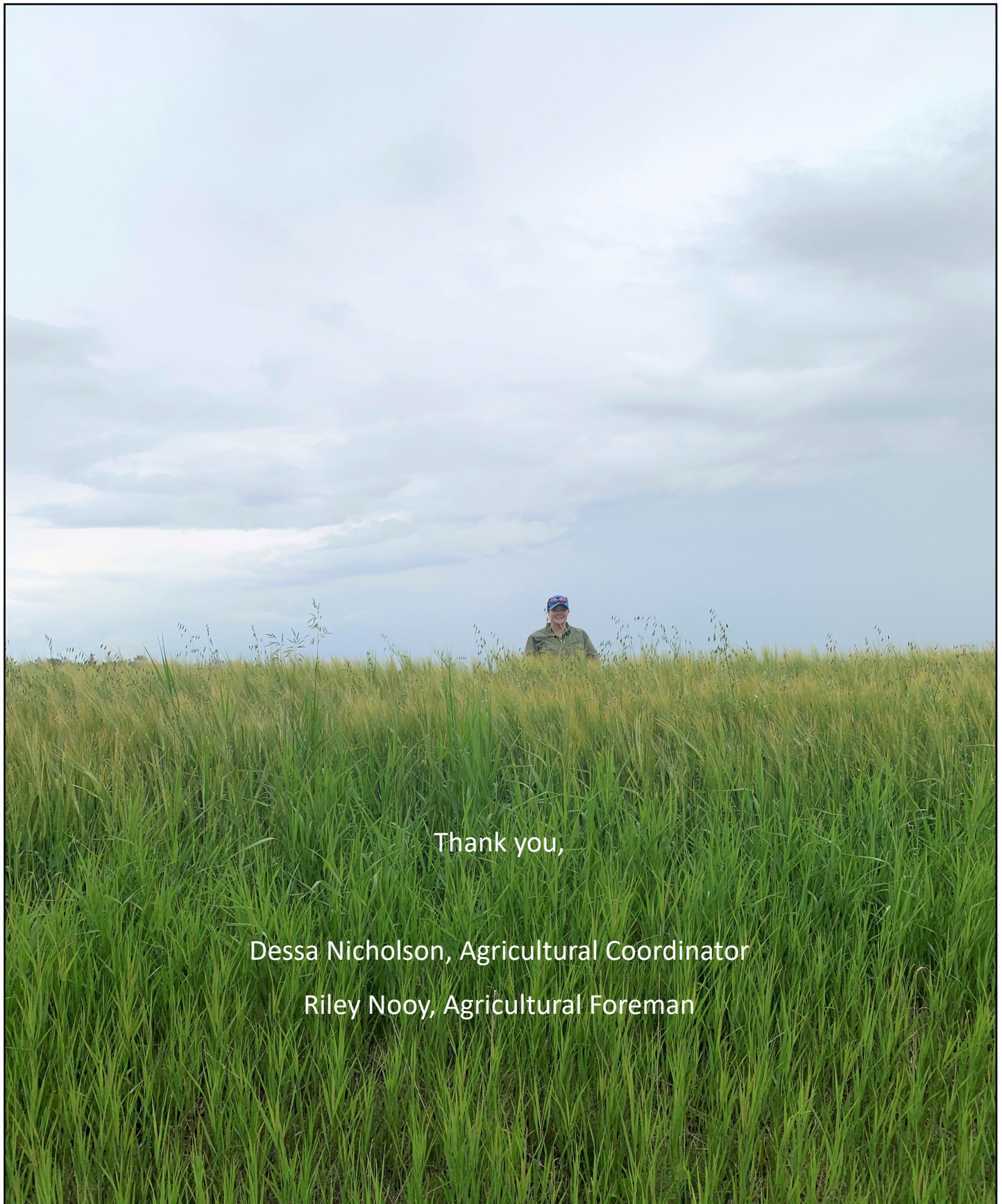
Riley Nooy, Agricultural Foreman

# 2019 Financial Statements - Rural Develop-

<b>ASB Administration Expenses</b>					
	25,015.08	487,849.39	481,946.32	(5,903.07)	101.22%
<b>ASB Board Expenses</b>					
	10,420.83	41,396.30	57,400.00	16,003.70	72.12%
<b>Animal Industry Expenses</b>					
	0	96,672.87	111,000.00	14,327.13	87.09%
<b>ASB Extension Expenses</b>					
	(23.59)	41,012.60	61,750.00	20,737.40	66.42%
<b>Plant Industry Expenses</b>					
	7,623.02	583,565.28	768,049.36	184,484.08	75.98%

Figure 3: Unaudited Financial Statements as of December 30th, 2019





Thank you,

Dessa Nicholson, Agricultural Coordinator

Riley Nooy, Agricultural Foreman