

COUNTY OF ST. PAUL

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 **Our Mission - To create desirable rural experiences**

County Agriculture News (CAN)

Spring 2023

Roadside Spring Spraying Program

Every summer the County of St. Paul is responsible for weed and brush control in our ditches or right-of- ways (ROW). These areas range in size but are usually about 33 feet off the center to each side of the road for 66 feet in total including the road. *We keep the ROW clear to ensure a line of sight can be kept for motorists who will see other vehicles approaching at intersections or animals aiming to cross the road.*

The greater the line of sight in these ROW's the greater your safety. Part of what is used to keep the ROW's free of plants that hamper this line of sight is herbicides. The County mainly use two herbicides with the trade names Aspect and Clearview. These herbicides are registered in Canada by Health Canada and undergo strict testing to ensure they are safe for people, the environment, animals, insects, and non target plants. These same herbicides are safe for use in pastures. We try to spray our ROW's at least once every 3 to 4 years to keep them clear and weed free.

If you do not want the County of St. Paul spraying the ROW's in front of your property you sign a 'Weed and Brush Control Agreement'. This agreement is far more than a No-Spray agreement because it clearly defines that the responsibility to control weeds and brush is now the responsibility of the landowner. It also highlights that, if for some reason, when we are spraying and we notice weeds or brush that is in the area of the agreement we may still spray it.

The County has an unwritten rule that if your ROW is completely mowed, it will not be sprayed unless weeds or brush are noticed that need to be controlled.

The County of St. Paul is bound to the *Weed Control Act* which has a list of about 80 plants that must be controlled or eradicated. We have a nice little booklet available to residents so they can become familiar with these weeds. Everyone is bound by the Act to control and destroy these named weeds on their property. The booklet, "Identification Guide for Alberta Invasive Plants" can be downloaded from the Weed & Invasive Species Control section of the Agriculture webpage.

Fast Fact In 2022, the County mowed about 1,700 linear miles with two roadside mowers. A smaller mower continued to mow subdivisions, transfer stations, the Iron Horse Trail and other special projects.

Spring Mowing

The County also uses mowers to control weeds and brush in the ROW's. In the past, the County has mowed the ROW's with our own equipment. The County had two 15' mowers that mowed the main roads in our County. This year, the County has contracted out the mowing on roadways to reduce costs.



The County has also changed which roads are mowed and this has been done according to how the road is classified. Only roads classified as Collector, Arterial Industrial, or Arterial will be mowed in 2023.

If you notice a road that may have been mowed in previous years is not mowed this year it is probably because of this new procedure. Some roads are being mowed that in previous years were not classified as a Collector, Arterial Industrial, or an Arterial Road. Arterial and Arterial Industrial roads will get two passes and Collectors will get one pass in 2023.

If you are not sure how your road is classified, the classification is available on the GIS WebMap on the County of St. Paul's web page. Go to 'For Residents' on the blue ribbon then select 'Maps' and then 'GIS WebMap'. If you hover over any road, the mapping will indicate if the road is classified Collector, Arterial, Arterial Industrial, or Country. If it's a 'Country' road it is not on the schedule to be mowed in 2023.

Agricultural Service Board (ASB) Contacts:

Keith Kornelsen, Agricultural Fieldman
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Manager of Waste and Agricultural Services
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Spring Thistle Problems

Over the past two years we have had dry falls. This weather condition has encouraged the growth and competitive advantage of deep-rooted weeds over shallower rooted plants like grass.



Canada Thistle (with a deep tap root) has become very prevalent throughout the County of St. Paul, especially, on pastures and in ditches. Canada Thistle is also a Noxious Weed according to the *Weed Control Act*. This means that landowners who have Canada Thistle growing on their property must take measure to control it.

The County of St. Paul has a mowing and spraying plan to deal with Canada Thistle but when the conditions are right it makes it very hard to control.

Herbicides are very effective in early spring or in late fall. Many options are available to landowners and, especially, farmers who want to use herbicides. These can take the form of herbicides that are selective and do not harm grass or non-selective herbicides like RoundUp that control all plants it is applied to.

Mowing can also be very effective when the plants are budding or just before flowering. The plant is expending all of its energy, pushing nutrients to the buds to eventually produce seed. This makes the plant vulnerable to some kind of mechanical control. Control could take the form of a mower, weed whipper, or even a herd of goats.

Canada Thistle is a pervasive weed that is hard to control when the growing conditions are right. It can be found all throughout the County and country but it can be kept at bay. The booklet, "Identification Guide for Alberta Invasive Plants" provides information about Canada Thistle, how to control and why it must be controlled. The booklet is available on the Weed & Invasive Species Control section of the Agriculture webpage.

Spring Squirrels

Spring is also a time where we see animals wake up from their winter slumber. Richardson Ground Squirrels (RGS) present a real problem to producers as they eat valuable crops and make the land dangerous for cattle.



As of spring 2022, Strychnine is no longer available for use to control RGS in Canada. Other options are available for producers with RGS problems. The County's ASB sells zinc phosphide coated corn at \$125/20 kg bag and zinc phosphide coated oats at \$165/20 kg bag (subject to availability). The St. Paul UFA can also order the product.

Zinc phosphide is applied in the same manor as Strychnine, and is considered a single feed bait that is not transferred to predators. The buyer must be able to prove they are a producer. The County will require a mailing address, rural address, home quarter legal land location and farm size.

Data points to this product being as effective as Strychnine so if you are having issues with RGS, ASB staff can help you.

Spring Water Issues

Spring is a time of warm weather, greenery and more time outside. It is also a time when the County of St. Paul runs into water issues.



Early in spring we work throughout the County with Steamers (not the drinks) to open up frozen culverts and ensure the water has a place to run. As the summer progresses the water issues turn from freezing issues to beaver issues. For spring, summer and fall the County of St. Paul is in a continuous struggle to keep our culverts and water ways open from damming caused by beavers.

If you see a culvert issue (it's plugged or it seems compromised) please call the County of St. Paul. Often these calls have alerted us to a minor problem that would have turned into a major issue had the call not been made.

We employ a trapper at the County to deal with ongoing water issues and advise County residents on how to deal with beaver problems. Many tools are available which can be used to combat the potentially destructive activities of beavers.



Whether it's trapping or setting up a siphon system or using dynamite the County can usually aid the landowner in some way to help the landowner coexist with beavers on their property. We do offer a service of blowing dams for \$250/dam removal. This is based on an initial inspection as not every dam is safe to blow. The landowner requesting that a dam be removed must be willing to show us where the dam is located.

If you are running into water issues this spring give us a call and we might be able to suggest a solution and help carry out the plan if it is affecting one of our roads.

Mouse Bait



The County sells mouse bait that can be sold only to bona fide farmers.

The bait is available through ASB staff who are located at the Public Works Shop. The cost is \$4.00/bag.

Is it a rat or a muskrat?

The Agricultural Service Board staff receives calls from residents about rat sightings. In 2022, 31 rats were found in the province. Single rats have usually come from B.C. or Saskatchewan.

The only real area of overland rat invasion is along the Alberta-Saskatchewan border between Cold Lake and the U.S. border. This 600 km long by 30 km wide area is known as the Rat Control Zone (RCZ) and is patrolled by trained pest control officers who deal with rat infestations as they arise.

Alberta is protected by overland rat infestations by the mountains to the west and sparsely populated borders to the north and south leaving only the RCZ as a route of entry into the province. It is estimated the program saves Alberta between \$30-\$40 million each year in economic and environmental damage.

The ASB staff strongly encourage people to snap a photo and send it to 310RATS@gov.ab.ca or call 310-RATS (7287). From the photo submitted, the critter can be identified. If it is a rat the sighting can be acted on right away.



Rats live primarily on land and prefer to build their nests underground, in trees, or in elevated areas within buildings.

Rats will rarely be seen moving during the day or out in the open.

Rats can reproduce quickly so if there are more than two, an infestation is declared.

Muskrats are aquatic and prefer to live in the wetlands. Muskrats will often be seen out in the open during the day as they migrate to a different habitat.

Muskrats have thicker tails than rats and can survive longer underwater. Muskrats look more like their relatives the beaver with their thick coat of fur and stocky appearance.



Are you interested in establishing a shelterbelt?

The County refers property owners who are interested in developing a shelterbelt to TreeTime.ca. There are many trees and shrubs to choose from at varying prices.

Farm Equipment on the Road

What is the most frequent type of multi-vehicle collision? Farm machinery being hit as it is turning onto a public road.



In what three-month period do almost half of all collisions occur?

- March, April and May
- July, August and September

For more information google [Safe Transportation of Farm Equipment in Alberta](#)

Chemical Container Recycling Moving to Ag Retailers

Farmers will be able to return empty jugs up to 23L to the point of purchase. Between now and the end of 2024, empty ag jug collection sites will move from municipal depots at landfills sites and transfer stations to ag retail collection sites across Alberta.



When you purchase pesticides and fertilizers your ag retailer will give you a free ag collection bag to store and transport your empty, rinsed container. Please use a separate bag for your seed treatment containers.

This new process is being phased in and will be completed by the end of 2024. In spring 2023, before farmers return empty jugs, they are encouraged to call their local retailer to ask if they have begun accepting empty containers for recycling. For more information on this and Recycling Plastic Farm Twine see the County's 'Waste Management' webpage.

Recycling Plastic Farm Twine

The County's Transfer Stations are part of a pilot project until August 2023 for recycling plastic farm twine. Burning the twine is one of the worst options because it releases toxins. *Free collection bags are available at the County's Transfer Stations.* Net wrap, fiber twine, nylon rope and bale wrap are not accepted as part of this program. Please remove straw and other debris before bagging the plastic farm twine.



Note: The Town of St. Paul, Town of Elk Point Transfer Stations and Evergreen Waste Management Transfer Stations are not part of this pilot project.

Feral pigs, also known as wild boar at large, are one of the **most damaging invasive species** in North America.



Hunting is not an effective control option.

For more information, visit abinvasives.ca

Report signs and sightings through:

- EDDMapS
- AF.wildboar@gov.ab.ca
- 310-FARM
- your local municipality

CANADIAN AGRICULTURAL PARTNERSHIP

ALBERTA INVASIVE SPECIES

Alberta

Canada

FOR RENT

The ASB offers a variety of rental equipment to assist with farm operations remaining profitable and sustainable. The program is open to County residents only. The equipment for rent is available from the County Public Works Shop during business hours. To book an appointment call 780-645-3006.

Rental waivers will be signed and equipment will be inspected by a County representative and the renter before the equipment leaves the Public Works Shop and when equipment is returned.

Available equipment for rent include magpie traps, loading chute with portable corrals, skunk traps, tree planter, cattle weigh scale, squeeze chute, post pounders, and scare cannons. See the County 'Agriculture' webpage for information on applicable rental fees.

Wildfire Prevention

Wildfire Season is March 1 to October 31. With a little planning you can reduce the threat of wildfire on your property.



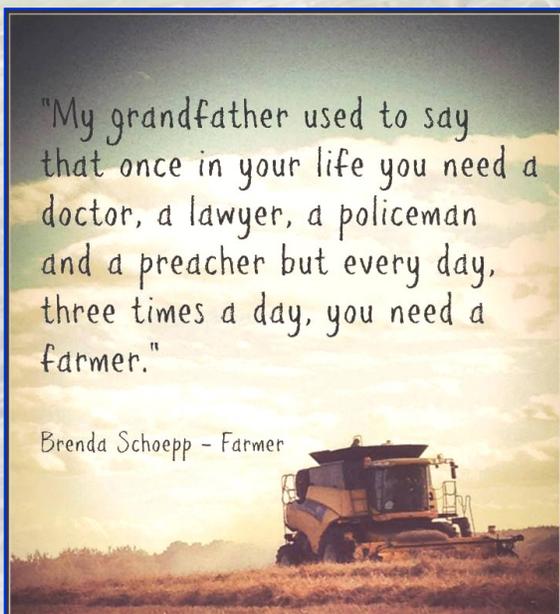
Property owners in the County of St. Paul can get a [free FireSmart Home Assessment](#). Are your gutters and the roof free of debris? That's just one issue around your home that's looked at by trained assessors in about thirty minutes. You'll receive an easy to understand report ... And peace of mind.

Contact St. Paul Deputy Fire Chief Henry Thomson at 780-645-4100 to book your FireSmart home assessment.

Visit the County's website 'Fire, Emergency Services & Safety' to download a copy of "Farm and Acreage: A Guide to Reducing the Risk From Wildfire".

"My grandfather used to say that once in your life you need a doctor, a lawyer, a policeman and a preacher but every day, three times a day, you need a farmer."

Brenda Schoepp - Farmer



The Association of Agriculture Fieldmen Bursary



The bursary is intended for Alberta students continuing their education at a College or University. Students must be enrolled in an agricultural or environmental science program.

The \$1,000 bursary is available each calendar year for each of the five provincial regions of the Association of Alberta Agricultural Fieldmen. *Applications are accepted until September 1.* See the County's 'Agriculture' webpage for the link to information and the application.

Upcoming

Farmer's Day is Friday, June 9

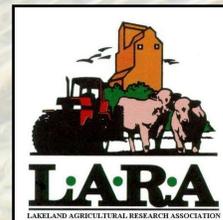
Celebrate your achievements and your contributions to our community and country. Thank you!



The **Regional 4-H Show and Sale** will be held on June 6 in St. Paul. The Show starts at 11 a.m., Parade of champions at 5 p.m.; Sale at 7 p.m. through in-person live auction or bid online with Direct Livestock Marketing Systems.

Lakeland Agricultural Research Association (LARA)

The County provides annual financial support to LARA to ensure its goal continues of "conducting applied research, demonstrations and extension programs that provide valuable unbiased information to local producers."



For information on LARA programming and research see LARA's Facebook or website: www.laraonline.ca

Alberta Agriculture

For Agriculture resources, courses and information: alberta.ca/agriculture

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