

# Agricultural Service Board Bulletin

December 2024

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### Did you know?

- About 30% of farmers in Canada are women. [StatsCan 2021]
- 1 in 9 jobs in Canada are linked to agriculture.
- It can take between 100-500 years of sustainable management to build just 2 cm of topsoil.
- In 2022, Canadians spent an average of approximately \$0.11 of each dollar of their disposable income on food.
- There are over 60,000 cattle ranches in Canada.
- Over 22,000 Canadian farms (12% of total) reported at least one type of renewable energy production. [StatsCan 2021]
- Agriculture employs about 1 billion people worldwide every year.
- The US is Alberta's largest agrifood export market, accounting for 49.8% of total agrifood exports in 2023.

## RESILIENT AGRICULTURAL LANDSCAPE PROGRAM (RALP)

### Unlocking the Potential of Farmland with the Resilient Agricultural Landscape Program

Farmers and ranchers have seized a unique opportunity to undertake beneficial management practices and sustainability in Alberta. The Resilient Agricultural Landscape Program (RALP) received over 400 project submissions in 2024, a successful year for the Sustainable Canadian Agricultural Partnership, a federal-provincial-territorial initiative.

Did you miss the 2024 application window? Find out what you need to be successful in 2025.

### What is RALP?

RALP is designed to bolster the environmental resilience of agricultural landscapes through the accelerated adoption of Beneficial Management Practices (BMPs). These practices are aimed at maximizing the provision of Ecological Goods & Services (EG&S), with a spotlight on increased carbon sequestration and enhanced climate resilience. The program acknowledges that while many BMPs offer immense ecological value, their adoption can be hindered by high upfront costs or limited immediate financial return for producers. To bridge this gap, RALP offers substantial financial support for approved projects, covering up to 100% of eligible expenses.

### Eligible Projects and Funding Opportunities

The program casts a wide net in terms of eligibility, covering a range of BMP projects including:

- **Pasture Management:** Enhancing the management of riparian areas to protect water quality and support aquatic life or implementing rotational grazing practices to sequester carbon and improve nutrient distribution.
- **Intercropping and Cover Crop Cocktails:** Integrating soil-building pulses and legumes into rotations to reduce nitrogen use and bolster soil health.
- **Shelterbelts and Eco-buffers:** Establishing natural barriers to protect soil from erosion and improve biodiversity.

For a detailed list of eligible activities and the specific funding available for each, please refer to the comprehensive guide on the Alberta government's website at <https://www.alberta.ca/resilient-agricultural-landscape-program>.

### Getting Started with RALP

Producers seeking to embark on a journey with RALP can learn more about what the program offers with a simple call or email. A dedicated team of Program Access Liaisons are ready to guide farmers through the application process and to help identify the most beneficial practices for their agricultural operation, ensuring they have all the resources needed for a successful application.

Reach out for application support by calling **1-866-310-RALP** or by emailing [info@RALP.ca](mailto:info@RALP.ca).

### Why Choose RALP?

Choosing to participate in RALP is not just an investment in your land, it's a commitment to the future of agriculture in Alberta. By adopting BMPs with the support of RALP, you're taking a proactive step towards creating a more resilient, productive, and sustainable agricultural landscape.

**RALP**  
RESILIENT AGRICULTURAL  
LANDSCAPE PROGRAM

## Prepare Your Farm's Future

### Consider a 2025 Project

- + Rotational Grazing
- + Grass Waterways
- + Intercropping
- + Pollinator Habitats
- + Wetlands
- + Off-site Waterers
- + Tree Planting
- + Riparian Management

**LEARN MORE**



# CHANGES TO THE AGRISTABILITY PROGRAM [AFSC]

The following is a press release from AFSC dated October 17, 2024. To learn more about AgriStability, visit <https://afsc.ca/income-stabilization/agristability/>.

## Saving Alberta farmers time and money

### Changes to Agriculture Financial Services Corporation's (AFSC) AgriStability program will reduce paperwork and lower costs for producers.

Farmers are vital to Alberta's economy, providing essential food resources and driving rural prosperity, yet they often face burdensome paperwork and high accounting fees that hinder their productivity. Governments are making changes to the AgriStability program to address these challenges.

A new option to align AgriStability reporting with tax filing in 2025 will result in less paperwork, reduce accounting fees, and make enrolment and participation in the program much easier. An accelerated deadline to submit program forms to AFSC will lead to earlier payments. Enrolling in AgriStability can also provide producers access to other credit options like the federal Advance Payments Program, which offers low-cost cash advances.

AgriStability is an individual, whole-farm, margin-based program that helps producers who experience margin declines greater than 30 per cent due to production loss, adverse market conditions and increased costs. In 2023, AgriStability also increased compensation for margin

declines exceeding 30 per cent, offering 80 cents per dollar of decline, up from the previous rate of 70 cents.

Producers rely on business risk management programs to offset the financial impact of many challenges. AgriStability provides income stabilization protection to help producers manage large margin declines that threaten their farm's viability.

Risk management is critical in farming and each producer needs to examine their situation and the tools available before making decisions. AFSC has a robust suite of lending, business risk management and insurance options that producers can access.

## Quick facts

- AgriStability protects Canadian producers against large declines in farming margins for reasons such as production loss, increased costs and market conditions.
- AgriStability is one of the business risk management programs under the Sustainable Canadian Agricultural Partnership.
- For more than 80 years, AFSC, a provincial Crown corporation, has provided loans, crop insurance and farm income disaster assistance programs to farmers, agribusinesses and other small businesses.
- AFSC provides leading, innovative, client-focused financial and risk-management solutions to grow agriculture in Alberta.
- The deadline to apply for 2025 program coverage is April 30, 2025.

## ENCOURAGING ALBERTANS TO "RAT ON RATS!"

November 5, 2024 – Edmonton, Alberta – Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada

A new campaign is reminding Albertans to do their part to help keep Alberta rat-free.

For more than 70 years, Alberta has proudly been rat-free, meaning the province prevents the pest from establishing a permanent population while swiftly dealing with any infestations. That famous designation is thanks to the hard work and dedication of Rat Control Program staff, and all Albertans can do their part by reporting rat signs and sightings.

Through Sustainable Canadian Agricultural Partnership (Sustainable CAP) funding to the Alberta Invasive Species Council, the governments of Canada and Alberta are reminding Albertans to "Rat on Rats!"

The \$110,000 investment will fund billboards and outreach materials encouraging Albertans to report rats and rat signs, as well as application training workshops. To celebrate the launch, the Alberta Invasive Species Council will be holding a forum at 11 am November 5.

While many regions around the world face growing rat populations, Alberta stands apart thanks to its proactive approach and commitment to rat control. Rats often hitchhike into Alberta on vehicles, cargo, and equipment, making it crucial for everyone to recognize that these pests are not native or established here.

## NORWAY RATS *Rattus norvegicus*

Alberta is  
"RAT-FREE"  
for over

70  
years

Pet rats are  
NOT allowed  
in Alberta



Rats are native to Asia, in North America, they are considered a pest.

### SIGNS OF RATS

- droppings
- gnaw or chew marks
- burrows or nests
- rub marks on walls
- strange noises



reproduce multiple times a year, at **8 weeks old**, with up to **12 litters** per year of **12-18 rats**

35

Rats can host **more than 35** different diseases that can be transmitted to humans.

**\$19,000,000,000**

Rat damages (food contamination, structural, public health risks and agricultural losses) are estimated to cost \$19 billion annually in the US.

Report signs or sightings to:

- rats@gov.ab.ca
- 310-FARM
- your local municipality
- EDDMapS app



## WEED AND BRUSH CONTROL IN PASTURES

The following is adapted from the Beef Cattle Research Council's May 26, 2021 article of the same title. To view the full article, and read more from the BCRC, visit <https://www.beefresearch.ca/blog/weed-and-brush-control-in-pastures/>.

Healthy and productive pastures are the foundation of a successful and sustainable beef cattle operation. When weeds and brush spread into hay fields, rangelands and pastures, desirable forage species are replaced, reducing productivity and profitability.

Pastures can be impacted by annual, biennial and perennial weeds, and each region across Canada will have different weeds that are problematic.

Weeds can be introduced through many ways including:

- purchasing feed such as baled hay, greenfeed, or straw that contains weed seeds
- seed distribution by wind (e.g., kochia or baby's breath)
- flooding that carries seeds onto a pasture (e.g. red bartsia)
- in contaminated soil or gravel
- animals returning from weed-infested pastures that bring back weed seeds in their manure.

While some weeds reduce pasture yield, others are poisonous and present a health risk to livestock. Providing cattle access to healthy, vigorous pastures reduces risk of poisoning, as cattle will usually avoid poisonous plants if adequate forage is available. Examples of toxic plants found in Canada include lupines, death camas, red maple or oak, larkspur, locoweed, henbane, water hemlock and poison hemlock.

Weed management, which includes cultural, mechanical, chemical, and biological methods, must be applied and evaluated over an extended period of time to be successful. A good weed management plan starts with cultural methods and integrates two or more additional control measures into a complete management system. The system must be applied and evaluated over an extended period of time to be successful.

Classical biological control uses natural enemies of weeds, such as insects or disease organisms. Biological control may also include the use of sheep, cattle, goats, or other large herbivores to manage weeds. While biological control is not intended to eradicate target weeds, it can be an environmentally safe, cost effective way to reduce weed pressures.

Targeted browsing of weeds by goats or sheep has been used with some success in larger areas of infestation where herbicide control is not practical. While cattle tend to avoid leafy spurge and thistle, targeted grazing as part of an integrated management plan can reduce weed density. Goats and sheep will also graze undesirable plants such as thistle, absinthe, buckbrush and aspen suckers. Fencing, herding, and predator control are required to keep goats and sheep grazing targeted areas, and safe from predators such as coyotes.

Bushes, forbs and shrubs provide habitat for wildlife, and can make up over 20% of livestock's diet on rangelands, as cattle graze the desirable forbs and forage plants. Undesirable or invasive brush can impact wildlife habitat when encroachment alters native ecosystems. Proper identification is important to ensure that desirable plants are not targeted for weed and brush control.

In many areas of Canada, brush encroachment by trees such as trembling aspen, willow, and shrubs such as buffaloberry, hazelnut, and snowberry, reduces forage yields and availability to cattle. When determining methods to control or reduce brush, consider the cost of control relative to the increased forage production gained. Since production improvements will vary greatly from one operation to another a helpful tip is to create a budget to estimate costs of brush removal versus the anticipated gains of increased forage yield and grazing days.

To learn more about weed and brush control on pastures, visit our new webpage: <https://www.beefresearch.ca/topics/weed-brush-control-in-pastures/>.

## THE GREAT TWINE ROUND-UP

**The Great Twine Round-Up is coming to Alberta with \$12,000 in cash prizes for 4-H clubs and ag charities!**

Cleanfarms, through the 'Alberta Ag-Plastic. Recycle-It! pilot program is hosting 'The Great Twine Round-Up'; a new province-wide twine collection contest with four cash prizes of \$3,000 each, for the winners' 4-H club or an Alberta-based agricultural charity of choice.

Here's how to participate:

- **Collect used plastic baler twine** in the collection bags provided for free at participating collection sites and select County offices.
- **Mark each bag** with your 4-H club/district name and the date, if you're participating on behalf of a 4-H club or full name/farm name and the date, if you're participating individually.
- **Drop off the bags** at a participating collection site between November 1, 2024, and May 31, 2025, and snap a photo of your bags at the site!
- **Submit your photo** through the contest webpage to enter: [greattwineroundup.ca](https://greattwineroundup.ca)

The more bags you drop off, the more entries you'll have. You'll also be helping to keep used baler twine out of landfills and burn piles.

There will be four chances to win;

- One early-bird prize draw for a winning 4-H club/district in January.
- Two prize draws at the end of the contest for winning 4-H clubs/districts.
- One prize draw at the end of the contest for an independent entrant's Alberta-based agricultural charity of choice.

For more information and full contest rules, visit the contest webpage: [greattwineroundup.ca](https://greattwineroundup.ca)

'The Great Twine Round-Up' is part of the 'Alberta Ag Plastic. Recycle it!' pilot program, through which Alberta farmers return used plastic baler twine and grain bags for recycling. Last year, Cleanfarms recycled 673,000 kg of grain bags and 95,400 kg of twine through this pilot. Learn more about this program: <https://cleanfarms.ca/alberta-ag-plastic-recycle-it-program-details/>.

County of Paintearth No. 18  
Box 509  
Castor, AB T0C 0X0  
Phone: (403) 882-3211  
www.countypaintearth.ca



### Agricultural Service Board

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Jeff Cosens  
Asst. Agricultural Fieldman:  
Trevor Kerr

Have an event or article suggestion? Email tkerr@countypaintearth.ca to have it included in the next issue!

### Test Your Knowledge

1. What number can you call to get assistance with the RALP program?
2. When is the deadline to apply for 2025 AgriStability coverage?
3. What email address do you use to report rats in Alberta?
4. Bushes, forbs, and shrubs can make up over \_\_\_% of livestock diets on rangelands.
5. When is the Great Twine Round-up drop-off deadline?
6. What were the 2 "right to repair" bills amending the Copyright Act?
7. Do you need to plant a forest to make an impact?
8. Alberta has been rat-free for more than \_\_\_ years.

### Test Your Knowledge Answers

1. 1-866-310-RALP
2. April 30, 2025
3. rats@gov.ab.ca
4. 20%
5. May 31, 2025
6. Bill C-244 and Bill C-294
7. No! Even smaller plantings can have an impact.
8. 70

## CATCH UP WITH BRRG EVENTS

Did you know you can catch up on events from the Battle River Research Group that you missed? Visit their YouTube channel (<https://tinyurl.com/2v255k74>) to make sure you don't miss out!

([https://www.instagram.com/brrg\\_ag/?hl=en](https://www.instagram.com/brrg_ag/?hl=en)) to stay in the loop on all upcoming events.

Visit Battle River Research Group on their website <https://www.battleriverresearch.com/>, Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/BattleRiverResearchGroup/>) and Instagram

# Battle River Research Group



## RIGHT TO REPAIR BILLS PASS FEDERAL GOV.

*The following is from the Alberta Farmer Express Article titled "Right to repair bills passed by Canadian government" by Phil Franz-Warkentin dated November 1, 2024. To read more from the Alberta Farmer Express, visit <https://www.albertafarmexpress.ca/>.*

The Canadian Senate passed two 'right to repair' bills amending the country's Copyright Act on Oct. 31, with the legislation now awaiting royal assent before becoming law.

Bill C-244 amends the Copyright Act by allowing farmers and others to bypass digital locks and access diagnostic software needed to repair machinery. Bill C-294 amends the Act to allow for increased interoperability of different technologies, including parts and computer programs, without violating copyright laws.

"After years of advocacy, these bills provide farmers the

ability to repair their own equipment, ensuring the continued functionality of the advanced technology essential to modern agriculture," said the Grain Growers of Canada (GGC) in a statement praising the passage of the legislation. "Together, these bills enshrine the right to repair, helping farmers manage their operations sustainably and independently."

The GGC called on the provincial governments to consider similar measures in their jurisdictions.

Bill C-244 was first introduced to Parliament as a private members bill in February 2022, by Wilson Miao, the Liberal Member of Parliament for Richmond Centre in B.C. Bill C-294 was introduced by Jeremy Patzer, the Conservative MP for Saskatchewan's Cypress Hills—Grasslands riding, in June 2022.

## THE BENEFITS OF TREES ON THE FARM

*The following is adapted from ALUS Canada's webpage by the same title. To view the full page, and other ALUS resources, visit <https://alus.ca/trees-on-farms/>.*

Trees are a natural, multi-purpose tool that provide several benefits to the farm and surrounding community. You don't need to plant a forest to make an impact. Smaller, strategic planting projects can address environmental challenges on the farm, enhance natural infrastructure and generate ecosystem goods and services that support resilient communities and help reduce the effects of climate change.

### The benefits of trees on the farm

**Reduce soil erosion.** Trees keep soils in place, protect against harsh winds, cycle important nutrients and support healthy microbial activity and plant growth.

**Protect herd health.** Trees shelter barns and livestock from cold, winter winds and provide shade on hot summer days.

**Clean the air.** Trees capture and store carbon and protect against pesticide drift.

**Improve water quality.** Filters water to keep lakes, rivers and drinking water clean.

**Increase biodiversity.** Trees provide food and shelter year-round for wildlife and insects.

**Enhance pest control and pollination.** Trees attract birds, pollinators and beneficial insects that help control pests and support pollination.

**Reduce winter maintenance.** Trees reduce blowing and drifting snow on roads and driveways.

**Protect stream health.** Trees keep nutrients out of waterways, cool streams for coldwater fish and stop streambanks from eroding.

**Reduce flood risk.** Trees absorb water, slow run-off and disperse rainfall.

### Put trees to work on your farm

Tree planting projects can benefit farms of all shapes, sizes and operations.



A Weston Family Initiative