



Agricultural Service Board Bulletin

S-CAP ON-FARM EFFICIENCY PROGRAM

The On-Farm Efficient Program (OFEP) will re-open to applications on April 1, 2025. Do your research and preparation now to ensure your application can be submitted quickly once the program opens!

The intent of the On-Farm Efficiency Program (OFEP) is to support producers in achieving environmental benefits by improving the efficient use of agricultural inputs. These practices contribute to environmental sustainability by reducing emissions, minimizing chemical runoff, and promoting the efficient use of natural resources.

Eligible applicants include a primary producer that is:

- responsible for the day-to-day management of an agricultural operation (such as an annual crop, bee, or livestock operation) in Alberta that produces at least \$25,000 worth of farm commodities annually
- responsible for input costs for that operation
- not a landlord whose only interest in the operation is ownership
- in possession of a current EFP certificate or letter of completion or able to receive either to submit with their final report. To be valid, your EFP must have been completed within the 10 years prior to the date your proposal is received. To get started on your EFP, visit: albertaefp.com.

The overall program funding maximum per applicant is \$150,000 over the duration of the program term (2024-2028). The minimum funding per application is \$500. Eligible expenses will be cost-shared at 50% grant and 50% applicant, except insulation, which is funded per square footage as stated in the Funding List.

The program has 4 Streams. The maximum funding per Stream over the duration of the program is (with examples of eligible items for each funding stream):

- \$50,000 for Smart Farm Technology
 - ◆ Agricultural drones with sensor technology such as thermal imaging or multispectral (spray drones are ineligible), variable rate technology on equipment, electronic livestock ID reader tools or systems, remote monitoring cameras
- \$50,000 for Energy Efficiency
 - ◆ Tankless water heaters, wall or ceiling insulation, heat pumps, metering equipment
- \$2,000 for Farm Security
 - ◆ GPS equipment tags, remote monitoring for fixed cameras, motion detectors/driveway alert systems, door sensors,
- \$100,000 for Efficient Grain Handling
 - ◆ High-efficiency grain dryer burners, electrical or gas submeters on dryers, natural gas lines to grain dryers

For more information about OFEP, the full funding eligibility list, the program terms and conditions, and the program application, visit the OFEP website at: <https://www.alberta.ca/on-farm-efficiency-program>.



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DID YOU KNOW?

- The average laying hen can lay about 320 eggs/year.
- 11 top quality basketballs can be made from one cowhide.
- Green peas have 3 times more fibre, 40% more iron, and 25% more vitamin A and C than green beans.
- McCain Foods produces one out of every 3 French fries consumed in the entire world.
- There are over 125 different vegetable and fruit crops grown in Canada.
- There are 855 native bee species in Canada (375 in Alberta) performing over 70% of pollination services on farms.
- Female Richardson’s Ground Squirrels are only receptive to breeding for 4 hours per year.
- Feral swine cause an estimated \$2.5 billion damage in the US annually.
- ASB’s in Alberta inspected over 9300 fields for clubroot in 2023.
- In 2021, 22 576 farms in Canada reported at least one form of renewable energy production (11.9% of total farms).
- The agriculture and agri-food sector contributes \$143.8 billion to Canada’s GDP (7.4%).



2025 ASB ROADSIDE PROGRAMS

Roadside Spraying

The County's roadside spraying program will commence on or about the first week of May (weather dependent). This year, ASB staff will begin with blanket spraying Division 1, then moving into spot spraying Division 7 and the southern portion of Division 6.

As per County policy, staff do not spray within 30 metres of a residence on either side. If you would like us to spray within that buffer area, an agreement must be signed. If no agreement is signed, any weed control within the buffer area is the landowner's responsibility. Contact Jeff Cosens (info at end) to complete an agreement.

Staff also do not spray alongside greenhouse oper-

ations, tree nurseries and gardens, or within 30 metres of and open body of water unless in accordance with the Environmental Code of Practice for Pesticides.

Roadside Mowing

Roadside mowing will commence mid-July with paved roads, then onto Division 5, proceeding counter-clockwise around the County. As in previous years, backroads will only be mowed in areas also covered by this year's roadside spraying program.

Landowners requesting roadsides NOT be mowed are asked to call the Director of Environmental Services, Jeff Cosens, at 403-882-3211.

Policy ESA 018 requires producers not seed any annual crops or forages in the ditches along roadways, staying at least 1 metre back from the bottom of the ditch.

REMINDER:

County Policy ESA –018 has been updated to require producers not seed any annual crops or forages in the ditches along roadways, staying at least 1 metre back from the bottom of the ditch. Any plants seeded in this area may be controlled or destroyed by the County mowing and/or spraying programs. Anything seeded on the landowner's property rather than in the ditch will not be subject to control or destruction under this policy change and may carry on as usual.

This addition to the policy was made in February of 2020 and will be implemented starting in 2025.

If you are renting land you own to a producer, please ensure that they are also aware of this policy change.

If you have any questions or would like a copy of the full text of Policy ESA 018, please contact Director of Environmental Services Jeff Cosens at 403-882-3211 or email jcosens@countypaintearth.ca.

MANAGING HERBICIDE-RESISTANT KOCHIA

The following is adapted from Manage Resistance Now's article of the same name. To view the full article and additional information, visit <https://tinyurl.com/b6f2hc6v>.

Herbicide-resistant kochia is one of the largest weed threats to crop production in Western Canada. Group 2 resistance was first reported in 1988; today, nearly all kochia populations in Western Canada are considered Group 2-resistant. A 2017 Alberta survey found 50% of kochia populations resistant to Group 9 herbicides and 28% resistant to at least one Group 4 herbicide. The same survey showed 16% of fields with triple resistance (Groups 2, 4 and 9 combined or stacked resistance).

Managing Multiple Herbicide Resistant Kochia

Due to the prevalence of kochia resistance, it's essential to be proactive and have an integrated weed management plan. There are specific BMPs related to managing herbicide resistance in kochia:

- Plan diverse crop rotations – Crop rotations that use a combination of early- and late-seeded crops will help keep kochia populations in check. Diversifying your crop rotation will also help ensure different herbicides are used each growing season. Incorporating winter cereals or forages that will compete with kochia can also reduce weed pressure for subsequent crops.
- Mitigate saline areas – Kochia thrives in saline areas that are unsuitable for crop production. Mitigate kochia growth in these areas by seeding them to saline-tolerant perennial forage.
- Scout fields early and often – Evaluate kochia control about two to three weeks after application. Look out for suspicious patches of kochia that may be resistant.
- Use in-crop herbicides following best practices – Mix and rotate herbicides – when possible, use at least two effective modes of action and always use labelled rates and timing.
- Use proper application techniques – To ensure optimum control, use recommended adjuvants and adjuvant rates, check your water source to ensure it is good quality, maintain adequate spray coverage by adjusting your water volume, and pay close attention to sprayer speed and boom height.
- Prevent plants from setting seed – It's essential to manage any kochia patches to limit weed seeds from entering the soil seedbank. This can be accomplished by spot spraying, fall burndown herbicide applications, using targeted tillage, or mowing before seed set.

THE VALUE OF WETLANDS

The following is adapted from the Cows And Fish Factsheet “the economic, social and environmental Value of Wetlands”. To view the full factsheet, visit <https://tinyurl.com/3w27sptf>. To find more information about connecting and & water, visit cowsandfish.org.

What are Wetlands?

Quite simply, wetlands are lands that are wet. They are low lying areas where enough water collects to support water-loving plants. Wetlands include the area covered by water and the adjacent area of lush water-loving plants - the riparian area. Wetlands are generally shallower than lakes, but both include the riparian area that separates them from the surrounding drier uplands. Wetlands are often called sloughs, ponds or potholes, but also include bogs and muskeg areas.

Wetlands are not wastelands. They are the connection in the watershed (drainage basin) we often can't see, linking groundwater, surface water in other wetlands, lakes and streams, soil moisture and weather patterns. Wetlands are so closely linked with other parts of the water cycle that drainage can have significant local effects such as lowering the water table, reducing local precipitation and creating greater temperature extremes.

There are many benefits to leaving wetlands and their surrounding riparian areas intact. Some are subtle, such as increased local soil moisture, reduced flooding, more stable stream flow, improved crop production and better water quality. Other benefits are more obvious such as supplying shelter, forage and water for livestock and providing wildlife habitat.

What do wetlands do for YOU?

Wetlands filter nutrients and improve water quality. The lush riparian vegetation around a wetland traps and holds sediment. Nutrients such as phosphorus and nitrogen, as well as heavy metals and pesticides, become attached to sediment.

Wetlands influence local weather. Wetlands pump water into the atmosphere through evaporation from the water's surface and as a result of transpiration from riparian plants. This moisture condenses in the atmosphere, creating clouds that can result in local and regional precipitation. This can be an important source of moisture for prairie farmland.

Wetlands help with salinity control. When a wetland is drained, it may act as a source of minerals and salts that accumulate in the pond interior, making it unsuitable for crop production. Leaving a wetland intact reduces the spread of surface salts

Wetlands recharge groundwater. Wetlands store and release water, some to the ground water table. Small, seasonal wetlands are especially important for up to 85% of ponded water ends up as shallow groundwater. A smaller amount percolates deeper where it may find its way to your well.

What can WE do for wetlands?

In droughts some wetlands completely dry up, sometimes for several years in a row. However, even a dry wetland provides many of the benefits described on the previous pages. Seeding a seasonal wetland while it is dry is a risky venture. There is increased danger of frost in the low area and a very high likelihood of flooding once wetter conditions return. Wetland substrates are usually quite impervious, and may be saline, which results in low crop productivity. Several studies have shown that the costs of draining and cropping wetlands are often higher than the crop returns.

What can you do?:

- Avoid draining wetlands, they are not wastelands.
- Maintain the full, natural extent of the riparian area around a wetland in a healthy condition and add an additional buffer where possible.
- The wider the buffer and the healthier the riparian area around a wetland, the more benefits that wetland provides. Wider buffers are required to effectively filter out sediment and greatly reduce the amount of pollution in the watershed. A wide buffer also traps more snow, increasing the amount of water captured in the local area.
- Maintain trees and shrubs growing around a wetland. These trees trap snow, hold runoff and create an upward movement of groundwater, making it available to adjacent plants and crops.
- It is important to manage grazing to prevent overuse and trampling by livestock, and to avoid manure build-up. A healthy wetland should have good plant cover to reduce erosion.

PRAIRIE WEEDS WEB-SITE LAUNCHES

The Western Grains Research Foundation (WGRF) is excited to announce the official launch of [Prairieweeds.com](https://prairieweeds.com), a comprehensive online platform designed to support the Prairie Weed Monitoring Network (PWMN) through the Integrated Crop Agronomy Cluster.

Led by Dr. Charles Geddes and Julia Leeson from Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC), the PWMN is a pioneering initiative aimed at implementing an all-inclusive weed biovigilance strategy across the Canadian prairies. The PWMN is a coordinated collaboration among federal, provincial, and academic weed science experts.

The PWMN will build on the existing and highly successful models of the Prairie Pest Monitoring Network, and Prairie Crop Disease Monitoring Network, and will formalize and coordinate weed awareness, detection/identification, and assessment activities for the Prairie region.

The Prairie Weed Monitoring Network (PWMN) is supported by funding from Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada through the Sustainable Canadian Agricultural Partnership's AgriScience Program – Clusters Component, WGRF, Alberta Grains, Alberta Canola, SaskCanola, Saskatchewan Wheat Development Commission, Saskatchewan Pulse Growers, Manitoba Crop Alliance, Manitoba Pulse and Soybean Growers, Manitoba Canola Growers Association, and Prairie Oat Growers Association.



The preceding is adapted from the Western Grain Research Foundation news release dated May 28, 2024. To view the full release, visit <https://tinyurl.com/mrx2x8ub>.

Agricultural Service Board:

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George Glazier
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Terry Vockeroth
Sandy Shipton
Diane Elliott
Dale Pilsworth
Dan Bunbury
Dir. of Environmental Services:
Jeff Cosens
Asst. Agricultural Fieldman:
Trevor Kerr

Test Your Knowledge

1. What is the cost share for eligible expenses under the S-CAP OFEP?
2. When was Group 2 resistant kochia first reported in Western Canada?
3. How much of ponded water ends up as shallow groundwater?
4. Are spray drones eligible for funding under the OFEP?
5. How far back from the bottom of a County ditch must all crops/forages be seeded?
6. Who do you call to request a road not be mowed by the County?

1. 50% grant, 50% applicant
2. 1988
3. Up to 85%
4. No, but imaging drones are!
5. At least 1 metre
6. Jeff Cosens @403-882-3211

Answers

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

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

County of Paintearth
No. 18

USING THE CALF VIGOR SCORING SYSTEM

The following is adapted from the Beef Cattle Research Council's March 7, 2024 blog post titled "Calf 911—How To Evaluate Newborn Calves...". To view the full article, watch a video about the scoring system, and download the scoring guide visit <https://tinyurl.com/5cbs5bf4>.

Ideally, after a calf is born, things go well, and the cow and newborn calf thrive. However, it is important for producers to know how to assess calves for subtle signs of distress or trauma that can occur due to a difficult calving.

Good vigor is a vital characteristic. A vigorous newborn calf has the best chance to remain healthy and productive within the herd.

The calf VIGOR scoring system is a standardized exam that was developed to help producers evaluate newborn calves and determine whether early intervention measures are necessary.

VIGOR is an Acronym for the Five Objective Measurements of Calf Vitality:

- V—Visual Appearance: Yellow meconium staining on a calf as well as swelling in the head and face can indicate a prolonged birth.
- I – Initiation of Movement: The ability of a calf to get up and move will predict its ability to mother up and receive adequate colostrum.
- G – General Responsiveness: Reflexes such as suckling, head shake, tongue withdrawal and eye reflex reflect a calf's vigor.
- O – Oxygenation: The mucous membrane or gum color is a good indication of how a calf is receiving and using oxygen.
- R – Respiratory and Heart Rates: Both the heart and lung performance can be easily assessed by counting the heartbeat and the breaths taken in 15 seconds, and then multiplying by 4.

A calf vigor score of below 20 would indicate an immediate need to intervene to ensure that a calf gets adequate colostrum, pain management, respiratory acidosis treatment and close monitoring for any other conditions common to newborns.

Knowing the VIGOR score of each new calf will help to determine if, and what, early intervention strategies should be used to give the calf the best chance of survival and good productivity through to weaning.

BIOCHAR WEBINAR—BRRG

Boost Your Soil with Biochar!

Join the Battle River Research Group for a free Zoom webinar on Biochar: A Game-Changer for Soil Health & Sustainability with experts Vicky Lévesque & Dr. Maren Oelbermann!

March 17th, 2025 at 9:00a.m.

Don't miss this deep dive into biochar's benefits for your farm!

Register now at <https://conta.cc/4hMoBUo> or call (780)582-7308.

To see all of the Battle River Research Group's upcoming events, visit their website at <https://www.battliverresearch.com/events>.

Battle River Research Group
www.battliverresearch.com

ZOOM WEBINAR
BIOCHAR: A GAME-CHANGER FOR SOIL HEALTH & SUSTAINABILITY

Dr. Vicky Lévesque
Dr. Maren Oelbermann

MARCH 17 9 AM

REGISTER ONLINE AT www.battliverresearch.com
CALL AT (780) 582 7308

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QUALITY OF PAINTEARTH NO. 18