



Stefanie and Cassandra Lepp of Rivers, Manitoba are using Instagram to promote agriculture. Their Instagram feed includes some posts that look like more traditional photo shoots, and others that highlight life on the farm. Their Instagram account is @thetullepps
See more photos on page B15

Lepp sisters using Instagram to promote agriculture

Stefanie and Cassandra Lepp, who farm together near Rivers, Manitoba, have a unique Instagram feed.

Posts that look like traditional fashion photography are interspersed with photos of life on the farm on their Instagram account, @thetullepps

They started their Instagram page two years ago. Their feed is a mix of farming

work-life shots and fun fashion photos, which the sisters brainstorm and shoot together inside their shared home down the road from the farm, on the land, or inside the workshops on the farm.

The farming shots are taken during the course of their regular work days. They also post style and lifestyle photos, which often include their horses and their dogs.

Both women went to university with a mind to join the family business. Stefanie studied web and graphic design and Cassandra got a degree in business.

Meanwhile, they'd also begun working on the farm part time and as their comfort on the farm increased, so did their discomfort at their desk jobs.

So, while both women stayed involved

with the family business, they decided to focus on farming.

Today, they manage the family grain and oilseed operation together. Their dad helps and advises, but has begun to pull back.

The sisters, age 31 and 27, grow soybeans, canola, barley and wheat on their family farm at Rivers.

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COVID-19 and the Canadian food supply chain

DR. BARRY PRENTICE AND DR. DEREK BREWIN

Dr. Barry Prentice, Department of Supply Chain Management in the Asper School of Business, and Dr. Derek Brewin, Department of Agribusiness and Agricultural Economics in the Faculty of Agricultural and Food Sciences, shared this op-ed on how COVID-19 has affected the Canadian food supply chain.

Your bread and salad dressing will still be on the shelves, but that does not mean that everything is normal.

Food supply chains are long, complex and certainly could be impacted by COVID-19. The likely outcomes depend on the particular food sector and the nature of the threat.

Fruits and vegetables

Imported sources appear to be stable and the refrigerated trucking industry continues to supply adequate transport.

It is likely that prices will rise because of seasonal changes and higher freight rates.

Domestic sources are of more concern because of the dependence the Canadian fruit and



vegetable sector has on seasonal foreign workers.

Each year about 60,000 workers from the Caribbean and Latin

America come to Canada to plant and harvest crops that range from carrots to apples. COVID-19 travel restrictions pose a real threat to

this sector.

Livestock products

Dairy and meat production are spread out and unlikely to suffer

many production problems, but at the processing level, the operations can be labour-intensive and at risk.

So far, no beef or pork abattoirs have suspended operations, but in Ontario a couple of industrial milk processing plants (e.g. cheese makers) and a chicken abattoir have closed.

This requires the Ontario producers to reduce production quotas and for dairy farmers to dump milk.

The impact has been limited, but the threat of a large-scale disruption of livestock processing cannot be ignored.

Grains, pulses and oilseeds

The major field crops and associated processing facilities are not likely to feel much affect from COVID-19 restrictions.

Farms are very dispersed and the processing/handling facilities are highly automated.

Combined with a significant carryover of field crops in storage from last year, and normal production expectations, there is no risk to consumers of shortages for pulses, flour or canola oil.

Continued on page B13

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Spring seeding will soon be under way on the Prairies. Kevin Weedmark got this aerial photo of crops in the Moosomin area in a previous growing season

Agriculture industry adapting to Covid-19

ROB PAUL

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

The vast majority of businesses throughout Canada have felt the impact of Covid-19 over the last two months.

Some businesses have had to close, some have had to adjust with employees working from home or switching to an online service system, but essential services have remained open.

The agricultural industry is one of the most important essential services still operating, providing food for Canadians during an unknown and stressful time.

Farmers aren't the only ones who must continue operating during this crisis, other businesses in the agriculture industry need to continue providing services to keep the industry churning.

Mack Auction embracing change

For the Mack Auction Company the ban on large gatherings changed the fundamental method of how they operate.

"The Mack Auction Company and its

farm customers decided to postpone April sales," said Mack Auction Company owner Norm Mack. "Just for the fact that this came about pretty fast and crowd restrictions came down so quick from 250 to 10 people."

"Therefore we just decided to postpone those April sales until later."

Due to the need to physical distance Mack Auction's shifted from in-person auctions to an online format to continue business during the pandemic.

"Now what we're doing is, we're going with timed online auctions," said Mack. "It's usually a five day option on the internet only so there's no crowds and people can go inspect the equipment they're interested in at the farmers location."

"Then they can come back after inspecting the equipment and have a week to place bids on the equipment."

"We've done the same with land sales," said Mack. "We've made them timed online auction only and they've proven to work really well."

With the unknown timeline of Covid-19,



Norm Mack

Mack Auction has adjusted so that they can continue online for as long as they need.

"Our June sales will be timed online as will some of our July ones," said Mack. "We're just waiting for government announcements."

"Maybe we can go back live later in July, but we're prepared to do all of our sales this year time online only."

Since Saskatchewan Premier Scott Moe's announcement on plans to re-open the province in phases, Mack says they'll be doing online auctions only for the foreseeable future.

"We made some adjustments and it's working out really well," said Mack. "You know agriculture through all this still has to go on and for the most part most farmers are isolated anyway with their equipment."

"The agriculture industry is essential business and it must move on and with that farmers are still going to need updated or new equipment, and they still have to sell."

"We'll see what the impact is for pricing, but so far everything looks strong," said Mack.

The adjustments to move the operation completely online has been smooth and using a predominantly online format could be the something they continue once Covid-19 has passed.

"It's not that hard adjusting for us," said Mack. "We were setup with timed online auctions anyhow."

"We were prepared all along over the last couple years with the software so for us it wasn't a big adjustment."

"Trying to convince some farmers that this is probably the way it's going to be this year, they understood totally and for some of them it may have been tougher to understand. This is the future in the auction industry," said Mack. "I'm sure we'll still see some live auctions, I'm not sure when, but it's business as usual for us after doing some juggling."

Continued on page B12

AgriStability interim payments increased for Sask producers

The federal and provincial governments have agreed to increase the 2020 AgriStability interim benefit payment percentage from 50 per cent to 75 per cent for Saskatchewan producers.

Interim benefits can provide producers with a portion of their final AgriStability benefit early, to help support losses and cover costs. With this increase, Saskatchewan producers can apply for an interim benefit to receive 75 per cent of their estimated final 2020 benefit before completing their program year. Saskatchewan Crop Insurance Corporation (SCIC) is also waiving the six months farming and one production cycle criteria for participants applying for 2020 interim benefits.

"I want to reassure all farmers and food business owners that our Government recognizes their vital contribution to our communities and is committed to helping them cope with this exceptional situation," said Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food Marie-Claude Bibeau. "These increased advance payments will enable Saskatchewan farmers and ranchers get the additional cash flow they need to continue their operations during these difficult times."

"In these uncertain times, the AgriStability interim payment can help producers with cash flow needs," Saskatchewan Agriculture Minister David Marit said. "If a producer qualifies for an interim benefit,

this is a great way to get additional funds for their operation before filing their final application."

Interim benefits are calculated based on the farm's estimated program year margin, relative to its estimated reference margin. The estimated program year margin must show a decline of 30 per cent or more compared to the estimated reference margin. If a producer receives an interim benefit payment, they must still file all final program year forms and meet program requirements by the assigned deadlines. The Governments of Canada and Saskatchewan understand the challenges facing producers during the unprecedented times created by the COVID-19 pandemic.

We continue to evaluate our entire suite of business risk management programs to ensure they are meeting the needs of Saskatchewan's agriculture industry.

To enrol in the AgriStability Program or to apply for an interim benefit, producers can contact their local SCIC office or call the AgriStability Call Centre toll-free at 1-866-270-8450. The deadline to enrol in AgriStability for the 2020 program year was extended to July 3, 2020.

SCIC AgriStability staff are available to assist producers over the phone at 1-866-270-8450 or through email at agristability@scic.ca, Monday to Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

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COVID-19 impacts on Canadian grains, oilseeds and pulses

BY CRAIG KLEMMER
WITH FCC

Over the next several weeks, FCC Ag Economics will help you understand the rapidly evolving business environment due to COVID-19. We're updating our 2020 Grains, Oilseeds, and Pulse Outlook to reflect changes in the operating environment.

Profitability is expected to remain tight in 2020 for grain, oilseed and pulse producers. Price volatility has surged through the first three months due to COVID-19. Lower prices of agriculture commodities have been partially offset by the lower Canadian dollar.

We expect average prices for corn, soybeans and feed barley to be lower than their 2019 averages. While canola, durum, yellow pea, and red lentil prices are expected to average higher than last year, they are still projected to be under their 5-year average. Spring wheat is the only commodity for which the 2020 average price is expected to be higher than the last year and 5-year average levels (Table 1).

Input prices are expected to be lower in 2020 and support profitability. Farm diesel prices have declined nearly 20% year-over-year in March, with further declines expected in April and May. Phosphorus prices have declined nearly 15%, urea prices are down 6%, and anhydrous prices remain unchanged. With significant fieldwork remaining in both Canada and the U.S., fertilizer prices could see a slight increase in April and May.

Supply and demand factors impacting prices
1. Global demand will be weaker at a time when



supplies are large
Large global supplies of grains, oilseeds, and pulses result in historically large global stocks-to-use ratios. This suggests limited opportunities for a major increase in Canadian exports. The 2020 global recession will invariably lead to declines in the demand for commodities in emerging markets. Large exporting countries like

Russia and Argentina are implementing export restrictions that could lift prices for Canadian exporters.

COVID-19 is introducing shifts in the movement of grains, oilseeds, and pulses, from domestic rail shipments to bulk ocean freight. Plant shutdowns in China led to a container shortage in Canada, creating issues for the movement of pulses and specialty crops.

2. Lower demand for ethanol vs projected 2020 U.S. acres
Confinement measures to 'flatten the curve' have led to a significant decline in fuel demand, pushing oil prices lower. The latest WASDE report lowered its 2019-20 corn used for ethanol down 375 million bushels, resulting in a 5% decline in the season-average price of corn or US\$0.20/bushel.

Despite the lower demand for ethanol, U.S. producers expect to increase seeded acres of corn by 8% to 97.0 million acres. It will be interesting to monitor how seeding intentions adjust to evolving market expectations.

3. Softening Canadian feed demand

Lower Canadian livestock inventories are expected to reduce the overall domestic demand for feed. Disruption in livestock processing facilities and weaker cattle and hog prices will limit any potential expansion in Canadian cattle and hogs in 2020.

Confinement measures shifted the demand for dairy products and triggered downward adjustment in milk production in both Canada and the U.S., reducing feed demand in 2020.

Building a strong marketing plan that accounts for future volatility in commodity markets will be a sound strategy.

CASH CROP	2020 FORECAST \$/TONNE	2019 AVERAGE	5-YEAR AVERAGE	RELATIVE TO 5-YEAR AVERAGE
Corn (ON)	\$196	\$210	\$190	↔
Soybeans (ON)	\$428	\$431	\$470	↓
Canola (SK)	\$466	\$427	\$468	↔
Peas (yellow - SK)	\$243	\$242	\$306	↓
Lentils (red - SK)	\$405	\$393	\$553	↓
Spring wheat (SK)	\$242	\$230	\$221	↑
Feed barley (AB)	\$231	\$257	\$211	↔
Durum (SK)	\$255	\$244	\$289	↓

Arrows indicate a higher price forecast ↑, moderately higher ↗, neutral ↔, moderately lower ↘, or lower ↓

Table 1. Commodity prices trending lower relative to the 5-year average

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How stress and anxiety impact farm decisions

BY TRUDY KELLY FORSYTHE

Farming is stressful. Equipment breakdowns at key times; unpredictable weather events; fires and diseases; public trust issues – the list of stressors can seem endless, especially when coupled with life's happenings, some good and some tragic.

And while stress can have a physical impact, experts say it can also impact the decision-making ability about the farm business.

Gerry Friesen, a conflict and stress management expert for Backswath Management, says stress has a huge impact on a person's decision-making abilities.

"When we have a lot of stress in our lives, we start making decisions based on what feels good or what may have worked in the past," Friesen says. "We ignore pertinent information or current information that can have huge impact on decisions we make."

Scott Gilson operates Sprucecure Ranch and Dairy in Manitoba with his family. Along with barley, oats and corn and hay, the family milks 82 cows and has a 80-head beef herd. Seasons of floods followed by drought caused high stress for the family as they made tough management decisions, including decreasing the beef herd and selling some quota.

IMPACTS DECISION MAKING

He agrees with Friesen and says stress certainly impacts decision making. "It can get to the point where you don't



want to go to bed as the nights are horrible because your brain won't rest," Gilson says. "Making operational decisions becomes more difficult and you find yourself unable to concentrate and taking hours doing chores that before only took minutes. You're frustrated with yourself and others, and you are just not the person you want to be."

Gilson says the nature of farming, where producers are always on and generally don't take the time to decompress, is mentally challenging.

"Being able to turn it off or worry about

it in the morning is not possible once the stress builds up," Gilson says.

Recognize the problem

In September 2016, Gilson attended a Canadian Red Cross course on Psychological First Aid that focused on self-care and assisting others going through stressful situations.

"One of the main points is the realization that stress is cumulative," Gilson says. "Events pile up on your psyche and eventually present as anxiety and depression to varying degrees when triggered by another stressing event."

The most critical part of looking after mental health is recognizing personal limits and seeing when you are unable to get it together and pull out of the depression.

"It doesn't work that way," Gilson says. "The hardest part is admitting to yourself that you are in trouble and need professional help."

TALK TO A PROFESSIONAL

Seeking help by speaking with a professional about feelings of anxiety, depression and stress can be extremely helpful. For one, it helps farmers begin to take control of their lives again.

As well as calling a provincial or territorial mental help line, going to a family physician is a good first step because they are the primary caregiver, can listen and can help determine a course of action.

"If medication is recommended as treatment, take it," Gilson says. "Sometimes all it requires is for you to start sleeping better; once that starts, the recovery is amazing."

BOTTOM LINE

Making operational decisions on the farm becomes increasingly challenging the longer mental health issues are ignored, experts say. Recognizing stress and seeking help to deal with stress, anxiety and depression are important steps to take to help ease the pressure.



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What to know when buying or selling farmland

BY FARM CREDIT CANADA

The decision to buy or sell farmland is multi-layered, with several angles to consider before deciding whether to put the property on the market or take the plunge and purchase it.

Chartered accountant Lance Stockbruger says interest rates and a focused, straightforward business approach are two important elements to have locked in when deciding whether to buy or sell farmland.

Interest rates, Stockbruger explains, can impact land price—lower interest rates mean lower overall cost for the land. For a buyer, that could mean an increase in budget.

“When I look at my overall payment, and my interest rates are so low, I can pay a little bit more for the land,” Stockbruger says. He adds the phenomena can also result in higher land prices as sellers are aware that buyers may be willing to increase their budget due to low interest rates.

From a seller’s point of view, low interest rates have other roles in helping decide the best time to plant the For Sale sign. Sellers should consider what they’ll do with the cash from the land sale, and how it will be reinvested.

Have a plan for the cash

“If I’m going to take this cash out of the land, where am I going to put it? If I put it into a similarly low-risk type of investment, I’m looking at a half to a 1% rate of return,” Stockbruger points out. “Maybe I’m better to own my land, or make that purchaser pay a little bit more so that I feel like I don’t have to get a big investment return after the fact.”

A focused business decision is also critical in considering why the land should be purchased. Buying land previously owned by the family, because it’s a familiar plot, or because “they’re not making any more land,” are emotional decisions and could lead to added expenses for the buyer.

“Make sure that you understand the economics of it as well, and all the other costs associated with it,” Stockbruger says. “There will be investment brokers and investment opportunities out there that offer or advertise decent returns, but with that usually comes a lot more risks than the owner would have with just owning their farmland.”

Check interest rates, Stockbruger reiterates, and seek advice from professionals on whether rates may have reached their peak.

If interest rates are expected to top out, and land prices aren’t anticipated to go much higher, the seller can decide if the sale price is satisfactory. Meanwhile, another landowner may not have a specific use for the cash from the sale and choose to keep the land.

Rent to maintain the land value

“I can get a good renter return, I can still maintain the value of my land,” Stockbruger says. “If the



have a long-term relationship with that person where we both can feel good about renting the land and making money on it.”

Bottom line

Farmland values, interest rates and emotional decisions should be considered when buying or selling farmland. Low interest rates can mean lower overall cost of the land. Meanwhile, sellers should ensure they invest the profits from the sale at a good rate of return. If landowners decide to rent instead of sell, establish a relationship with renters to help both parties get decent returns from the land throughout the relationship.

land prices continue to go up, I’m going to be able to capture that as well, so I’m just going to hold my land.”

When opting to rent land, both the landowner and the renter need to work

on establishing and maintaining their relationship, Stockbruger says. The landowner may not farm, but likely has a connection to agriculture. As a renter, staying in touch with the

landowner can be a wise business decision.

“Relationships are a big part of renting land,” Stockbruger says. “Build a long-term relationship so that they understand the good

years and the bad years. They can work with you to make sure that you’re both going to stay in business, and both get decent returns over the career that you’re going to share. I want to

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Distilleries producing hand sanitizer in fight against Covid-19

ROB PAUL

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

There's more demand for hand sanitizer than ever due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the need to stop germs from spreading.

This has led to shortages throughout North America with some people hoarding products, essential business having to bulk order, and health workers needing it to stay safe.

Although proper hand washing technique with water and soap is the best way to stay hygienic during this, alcohol based sanitizers are the next best option.

To help with the hand sanitizer demand during this crisis, Health Canada has temporarily changed its rules to authorize the use of technical-grade ethanol for use in hand sanitizer products.

Regularly hand sanitizers are made with United States Pharmacopeia (USP) or food grade ethanol, but Health Canada made the decision to change their rules around ethanol during the shortage.

The hand sanitizer that is approved by Health Canada as an alternate option to proper hand washing must be at least 60 per cent alcohol to meet the requirements for safety.

Manufacturers using technical-grade ethanol in their hand sanitizers must provide additional information on their product labels to support the safe use of their products:

- Clearly indicate that technical-grade ethanol is included as an ingredient.
- Specific directions for use and warnings that these products are intended for adult use only, that they should not be used on broken or damaged skin, that they should not be used by women who are pregnant or breast-feeding, and they should not be inhaled.
- Information on how to report any adverse reactions to Health Canada.

Health Canada allowing for these hand sanitizer changes has led to other manufacturers stepping up to offer a helping hand during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Distilleries across Canada have the majority of the ingredients needed to produce alcohol based hand sanitizer and many of them have answered the call when the need became clear.

It began with Niagara's Dillon's Small Batch Distillers and Vancouver Island's Victoria Distillers in mid-March and over 60 distilleries from across Canada have joined since.

Saskatchewan distilleries are putting hand sanitizer before spirits with the work they're doing.

Sask. distilleries stepping up

Distilleries in Saskatchewan such as Smooth 42 Craft Distillery (Brownlee), Stumbletown Distilling (Saskatoon), Lucky Bastard Distillers (Saskatoon), Last Mountain Distillery (Lumsden), and Radouga Distilleries (Blaine Lake) have been producing hand sanitizer for free for first responders and essential service workers, and some have begun selling it to consumers with the high-demand for the product.

When Smooth 42 Craft Distillery co-owner Sacha Elez became concerned the health care system could be overrun due to Covid-19 he wanted to do something to fight back.

"We were kind of the first in Saskatchewan to start making sanitizer," said Elez. "We actually started making a rubbing alcohol first before the approved formula came out."

"We had no idea how many people were in short supply and as soon as the orders started coming in we just shifted our focus from making booze to making hand sanitizer."

"When we initially started, it was just an offer. We basically said, 'if your an emergency service worker, police, nurse, paramedics and you can't get hand sanitizer then we're donating it to you for free.' That was the whole idea," said Elez.

"We gave out about \$75,000 worth because orders just started flooding in and I was getting about 120 phone calls a day."

With the overwhelming demand for hand sanitizer Smooth 42 began producing it for anybody in need.

"Then we opened up a GoFundMe cam-



Above: The hand sanitizer Stumbletown Distilling and Lucky Bastard Distillers teamed up to produce during the Covid-19 pandemic.

aign to try and get some money coming back in to fund the donations we were sending out."

"It became obvious that we weren't able to keep up with our costs like that," said Elez. "So we shifted gears to start selling hand sanitizer."

"It was the right call because since we started selling it we've been able to afford to buy more efficient equipment which allows us to produce even more sanitizer."

"If we were giving it away the whole time and working with what we had with no income then we'd only be able to produce a fraction of what we're currently making."

"Right now our production is about 31,000 litres per week of hand sanitizer," said Elez. "We're running 20 hours a day out here to keep up with the orders."

Everybody in essential services needs hand sanitizer to continue to work in a healthy and safe environment during the pandemic.

"I'm amazed at the different varieties of businesses that are ordering from us," said Elez. "From trucking companies to office supply companies to restaurants, pharmacies, clinics, daycares, grocery stores, corrections, RCMP, police departments all over Saskatchewan."

"When we're back ordered we try to prioritize anything to do with essential services."

Once Saskatchewan is in the clear, Elez says they would only likely continue to produce sanitizer if other provinces needed the help.

"The whole point is to help stop the infection rate and flatten the curve in Saskatchewan first and foremost," said Elez.

"If there's no orders coming in for Saskatchewan because we're all set here then we'll be sending it off to whoever needs it the most whether that be in Alberta, B.C, Manitoba, or Ontario, whoever needs it."

Opportunity to help

When the need for more hand sanitizer producers became clear, Stumbletown Distilling saw an opportunity to help.

"As soon as COVID-19 started spreading I saw some friends who have a distillery in B.C. and they jumped on it right away," said Stumbletown Distilling owner Craig Holland. "I was trying to follow suit and do what we could to help."

"We've got a byproduct that's not usable, but we could repurpose it by following a formula to turn it into hand sanitizer."

"The main ingredient started off as a byproduct of what we are producing with our alcohol products and then there's a few things to add to turn it into hand sanitizer following a World Health Organization (WHO) formula," said Holland.

Stumbletown Distilling teamed up with Lucky Bastard Distillers to produce as much hand sanitizer as they could for those in need.

"We actually approached our buddies at Lucky Bastard and decided to partner with them to make it," said Holland. "They've got a bigger facility and more manpower so



it made sense."

"We've manufactured it all at Lucky Bastard's so far, they're only a few blocks away from us," said Holland. "So it was nice for us to just take some of our stuff over there and work on it with them."

"It's just the right thing to do," said Holland. "People needed help and there's a global shortage so this was a way we could get involved and do our part."

With the help of donations, the two distilleries were able to work together to concentrate on producing hand sanitizer for free.

"We got some other companies involved who kicked in some donations," said Holland.

Saskatchewan Blue Cross, Courtesy Plumbing and Heating, and Custom Labels who does a lot of our labelling for our products, so we had some help from other companies around Saskatoon as well."

Since they began in mid-March, the distilleries have almost become solely focused on hand sanitizer.

Given Away

"We've actually given away over 8,000 litres of hand sanitizer, which is a crazy amount," said Holland. "We gave away more hand sanitizer in a month than we produced in spirits in a year."

"We focussed on first responders and front line workers," said Holland. "When we first got going it was all going to those guys who needed it the most and couldn't get it."

"We had a three tier system, front line workers, first responders, and other critical services and health care professionals."

"Once we had enough we gave some to the public," said Holland. "We'd just announce it on social media and I think we've given away 1,400 bottles on two separate occasions."

"The last two weeks of March and the first week of April was pretty much all focussed on hand sanitizer."

For now, they haven't begun selling hand sanitizer as a product, but with the demand going forward they're considering sticking with producing hand sanitizer as well as spirits.

"We haven't sold any yet, we've donated it all," said Holland. "We can't afford to do that forever so we will begin to sell it probably."

"It was nice to be able to get it out there for free to the people who needed it while

the demand was super high."

"Just because of the situation, it could be a high demand product for a long time," said Holland.

"Even when things get back to normal people will probably be buying more hand sanitizer than they were."

"People have reached out asking to buy it so we'll try to do what we can to keep everybody in supply," said Holland. "A lot of big companies like construction and mining companies want to buy big orders of it."

"We'll probably begin to sell it, we're not looking to go into the hand sanitizer business, but because there's a demand it's something we'll try to provide as a company."

Partnering

Last Mountain Distillery partnered with their competitor Radouga Distilleries to gain access to more alcohol to donate hand sanitizer during this time.

"We're not looking to retail it," said Last Mountain Distillery co-owner Colin Schmidt. "We've made some to do our part and haven't really advertised it."

When the shortage of hand sanitizer began, people reached out to Last Mountain Distillery to see if they would consider producing hand sanitizer.

"Weeks and weeks ago as soon as the shortage happened we got licensed by the federal government in quick order in order to do it," said Schmidt.

"It was about the same time Lucky Bastard was doing it," said Schmidt. "We were getting calls from health care professionals, local EMS and firefighters saying that they were out of hand sanitizer."

"It was a no-brainer for us to get licensed and do what we could to contribute," said Schmidt.

"People reached out directly to us and asked if we had the ability to make it and I did some research and there was a formula put out by WHO that complies with Health Canada's requirements," said Schmidt.

"We had all the components we just had to get our hands on some glycerol and we were good to go."

With how easy it is for the distillery to produce, it seemed like the perfect way to use their time and do their part says Schmidt.

"It's actually very easy to make, it's just hard to source the ingredients right now because they're in such high demand," said Schmidt. "It's literally a matter of compounding three items together and having the ability to test alcohol percentage accurately."

Wanting to help

For Last Mountain Distillery they just wanted to help those who needed it because they knew they could during the pandemic.

"We've donated over 1,000 litres and we have plans to make some more," said Schmidt. "We have some farmers that have reached out to us, the people who provide wheat for our rye."

"If you think about it, most of us have access to soap and water," said Schmidt. "A lot of people who really need it are the people in the field and first responders so that's where we've kind of deemed ours will go."

"We went around our local community and every shop that's still open and needed it, we donated it to them," said Schmidt.

"We sent the health care professionals that can't keep up with supply 1,000 litres to be packaged and sent to the front lines."

Schmidt isn't looking for a pat on the back or media attention out of this, he's just looking to do the right thing.

"In times like this you see the best and the worst in people," said Schmidt. "And we're trying to show our best."

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WCVM vet clinic providing essential animal care during pandemic

BY KATIE BRICKMAN-YOUNG
 The Western College of Veterinary Medicine (WCVM) and the Veterinary Medical Centre (VMC) at the University of Saskatchewan (USask) have modified processes and protocols around veterinary care, to protect staff and clients.

"Many changes have been made and continue to be made daily with the ever-changing landscape of this virus," said Nadine Schueller, director of clinical care at the VMC.

The WCVM's veterinary teaching hospital shifted to only caring for emergencies, urgent cases and cases already under treatment in mid-March. That change also included removing all fourth-year veterinary students from clinical rotations in the hospital to help minimize the impact and risk of the COVID-19 virus.

"We essentially became an emergency clinic, as opposed to a full-service referral and primary care hospital," said Dr. Steve Manning (DVM), associate dean of WCVM clinical programs.

The hospital also moved to a shift schedule in which veterinarians, registered veterinary technologists, animal attendants and other staff work together on six teams that rotate through eight-hour shifts around the clock.

"The teams stay together and don't interact with the other teams or people, so that we can keep the risk of the coronavirus as low as possible," said Man-



Photo: Christina Weese

The WCVM Veterinary Medical Centre has shifted to offering emergency and urgent care only during the COVID-19 pandemic.

ning. "Our staff have been incredible. As this crisis changes daily, we've asked many things of them as we change the way we operate. Everyone is helping each other and it is a stressful and busy-but positive-environment."

Processes and procedures have also changed for VMC clients. To minimize contact with VMC staff, no clients are allowed in the building.

"These changes allow us to protect the health

and safety of our staff, clients and patients while maintaining high-quality care for our patients," said Schueller.

The VMC staff are following stringent admission and discharge protocols to minimize contact with clients. Clinical teams are also using additional personal protective equipment (PPE) and following recommendations from public health officials as well as other veterinary teaching hospitals across

North America.

"Our single most important protocol in place is hand hygiene," said Diane McDougall, director of quality and operations at the VMC. "We can reduce viral and bacterial spread with regular cleaning of common touch points, wearing the proper PPE and using physical distancing to mitigate potential spread."

The Government of Saskatchewan deemed veterinary services as an essential

service in its Emergency Measures Act announced in March, and the VMC has continued to provide emergency care needed to both small and large animals. Its Field Service teams are also working hard to support local horse owners and livestock producers.

"We are super proud of the staff and clinicians. Not only have they been able to adapt, but many of them have gone above and beyond with 'think outside the box' ideas and solutions

to help with this evolving situation," said Schueller. "They show their love and care for their patients, not only because it is their job as an essential service, but because they understand their patients need them."

As the VMC continues to look after the welfare of animals, officials have also been in contact with the Saskatchewan Health Authority (SHA) to see how the veterinary teaching hospital can support human health care in this crisis.

"We have already been of assistance to the health authority. We have given them an inventory of some of the diagnostic and imaging equipment that might be helpful if the rate of hospitalization of people goes up significantly," said Manning.

On top of imaging equipment, including access to the college's new PET-CT suite, the VMC also offered two ventilators to the SHA, as the provincial organization works to increase the capacity for ventilators in local hospitals.

"We have multiple ventilators in the college, but the two that are suitable for people went over to Royal University Hospital," said Manning. "The SHA knows what we have in our inventory and we will continue to help where we can."

If your animal needs care, please contact the Small Animal Clinic at 306-966-7126 or the Large Animal Clinic at 306-966-7178 before coming to the WCVM.

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Agriculture industry continuing to adapt during Covid-19

Continued from page B3

At the end of the day, Covid-19 has impacted everybody and Mack is just pleased it wasn't detrimental for their service.

"Was it an inconvenience for us? Sure it was, just like it was for every other business," said Mack. "We had to do some quick jumping and phoning and rearranging, but I'm sure it will all work out in the end."

With the live auction business revolving around large gatherings and travel, Mack says, continuing their online auctions just seems like smart business.

"I think for the most part, gatherings of any sort whether it be auctions or sporting events, it's going to take awhile for the general public to gather shoulder to shoulder in large numbers again," said Mack.

"As far as the auction industry, even our live auctions we broadcast live over the internet, so farmers are bidding on their phones while they're working or so they don't have to travel."

"You may see at our live auctions smaller crowds, but as you see smaller crowds our numbers on the internet are increasing every year," said Mack.

Farmers still need to purchase equipment and need to repair it if it breaks down during the pandemic and Rocky Mountain Equipment has been operating with changes to provide the agriculture industry with that option.

Adjustments at RME

"It's day-to-day adjustments," said Rocky Mountain Equipment Branch Sales Manager Jason Miller. "Store traffic has been the biggest change."

"Long-term for the agriculture industry there are so many unknowns out there, but short-term I don't see it having a huge impact locally or on us," said Miller.

"Guys still have to get their stuff fixed and have to get the crop in the ground. It's business as usual for the most part."

The changes are constant and many essential businesses have had to opt for



Parrish and Heimbecker facility west of Moosomin.

remote options to continue working.

"It started out on the fly with changes as restrictions got more and more and the other part of it is we've got customers who expected it so everybody has realistic expectations and they're quite accommodating," said Miller.

"We've got limitations when guys enter the store and distance is kept and we're encouraging orders ahead of time so we can send stuff out."

"It's lots of phone transactions and phoning and texting people on the sales side," said Miller.

Despite the lack of physical interactions and the different adjustments being made, the amount of work to be done in agriculture industry has not changed.

"It's drastic for us in sales," said Miller. "It goes against everything we've been taught in the sales world, but for the most part it's kind of status quo for agriculture."

"The crops got to go in, guys are going to seed, and people have got to eat."

"The service guys still travel for field fixes and stuff like that," said Miller. "We've all been coached and told what to do as far as distancing."

"Farmers are well aware on the importance of distancing and nobody is really skirting around the rules, it's something everybody is taking seriously."

"We're fortunate to be in an industry during this time where you get up and get to go to work everyday still," said Miller. "One benefit of living in small town Saskatchewan is we've sort of come through this relatively unscathed."

P&H keeping safe

For Parrish and Heimbecker, they provide services from crop input products to grain contracting options and that can't stop during Covid-19 leading to them making adjustments. "We've locked our front doors so no producers are allowed in, we started mailing our cheques out, in the driveway we've made it so they can't come into the office either," said Parrish and Heimbecker Manager Cory Woywada.

"We've also spent more time cleaning everything."

"I think it's going to be like this for awhile and we'll adopt more of the practices and try to continue to physical distance."

Ultimately, everybody involved in the agriculture industry understands the adjustments are necessary and their work must go on.

"It's just different, change is always different," said Woywada. "I think everybody seems to get it, there's been no backlash."

"It wasn't too difficult to implement the changes. We have an HR staff keeping us up to date. It's just hard to get supplies that we need."

"Some of our sales reps are working from home and we've only got half the administrative staff here to help physically distance," said Woywada.

As Covid-19 continues, Woywada thinks tougher adjustments could have to be made as seasons change.

"I think it'll get harder as we get into the spring season here," said Woywada.

"Usually we have chem reps stopping by all the time updating the new programs and chemicals and they can't do that physically, they have to do that over the phone."

Overall, the agriculture industry has adapted to the changes being made to operate during Covid-19 and will continue to do so as an essential service.

"It hasn't really impacted the amount of traffic we're seeing because the producers are still working too," said Woywada.

"You just don't have the producers coming in for coffee and visiting anymore, it's more of just business."

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Life down on the farm

Isn't it interesting how some things just don't matter quite as much as they did a month or two ago? Ahhhh yes, perspective isn't it? COVID-19 has changed many things, but out on the farm, life has continued on, albeit a little less quiet to be sure.

Every spring season, aka calving season, I groan at the mud and dirt that gets carried into the entry way of our home. When we actually lived on the farm, it drove me crazy, always cleaning the floor and washing the mats. Now we live in town and it's not a whole lot different. The cows still need to be fed and though I no longer walk through much muck anymore, my husband tends to bring in his share of it from the farm. Every single day.

My groans however have been replaced with great thankfulness as I clean the entryway during these days of near isolation—all things considered, cleaning the mud from the front entry really is nothing in comparison to the bigger challenges of life that we are all facing right now.

Today, I decided to challenge myself. I mean, during COVID, some things have really changed. We order groceries in. We disinfect doors and appliances, sinks and grocers. But some things are the same—making the bed for instance. Or folding towels—lots and lots of them. And here was my challenge. I always fold towels, sewn hem in, never out. So I tried to fold them sewn hem out, because really it just doesn't matter, right? Alas, it bothered me so much and for an entire 20 minutes so I had to unfold them, flip the sewn hem in and refold them. My kitchen meanwhile was an upside down disaster zone. So much for that OCD theory people talk about.

Meanwhile out at the farm where the 'farm grandkids' live, life has changed quite dramatically with no sports and no school (with the exception of the 'school at the kitchen table' part). The twins spend almost every waking hour outdoors, creating, playing, building, hiking in

The Lighter Side of Life...
DOWN ON THE FARM
by donna beutler
FREELANCE PHOTOJOURNALIST
dl_beutler@yahoo.ca



the bush, running with the dogs and riding their bikes. Last week, my daughter in law asked one of the boys if he had done his math schoolwork. "No," he said, "it's much healthier for me to be outside as much as possible." Point well made, young man!

Since we are isolating as much as is possible, I do recognize the need to fill up my days with various things to do and that has resulted in the making of many casseroles and cookies to drop off at the kids' houses. The other day, after cleaning out the pantry and seeing the number of jello boxes I had stacked up, I decided to also make some jelly salads for the kids. When I attempted to grab a few different colours though, I was hit with the realization that all my jello boxes were taped together. Every. One. As I wondered when 'they' did that, I did figure out why that stack of 13 jello boxes had stayed so neat all the time!

After ten minutes of cutting the boxes apart with a utility knife, I was ready to tackle the project, if making jello is considered a project. The end result must have been a

big hit because the next day, the twins were already asking when I was making the next one!

If you know me at all, the kitchen is the least favourite place in the world for me to be, so with the warmer temperatures and the sun shining, I was itching to get my lawnmower out. I am quite sure only farmers would see having a 48" zero turn mower on a 50x150 foot town lot as a necessity and I was happy to get it out and freshen up the lawn. That being said, it takes all of seven minutes to cut the grass in town and it wasn't long before I was pacing, wondering what I could possibly do now.

As luck would have it, there's a ginormous amount of grass available for the cutting out at the farm and off I went. Now to be honest, there wasn't all that much grass cutting going on—it was more a blowing of the leaves and the dust. Two hours later, I looked as if I had been cultivating summerfallow (oh those were the days!) on an open air tractor—I was as black as soot. I climbed off the mower, not even daring to run my tongue over my lips for fear I would eat more dirt.

The twins were off a little way from the shop when I parked the mower and I heard them say, "Grandma, why are you stopping? You didn't do the back yard yet." Thanks for pointing that out, guys.

These pre-seeding days are short-lived for all grain farmers, I know. The planning is done, the inputs are on order, the machinery is being prepped for the long days ahead and then one day, my guys go from busy to super busy and I never see them again for weeks to come. After 40-some years of farming, I feel like I should be used to that sudden loss of the guys from the farm yard to the field but there's always a bit of melancholy that washes over me. On the flip side though, as the tractor rolls late into the night, I, all tucked in my bed, will smile happily—for the remote will be all mine!

COVID-19 and the Canadian food supply chain

Continued from page B2

Of course, shoppers may find some empty shelves temporarily because of "panic" hoarding, but the supply chain should replenish these gaps quickly. Some concern has been raised about the ability of farmers to obtain inputs to plant the next crop. This has not materialized into any visible problems, at least, not yet.

Food logistics

The COVID-19 reaction has brought to the surface how much society depends on the transportation and warehousing sector to move and store products that end up on grocery store shelves. It has also highlighted the essential nature of all the workers who stock shelves and serve at the checkouts. All these people must operate in the presence of possible infection. While no stores or supply chains have ceased operations, the biggest impact is in the food service industry that supplies the restaurant and hotel trade. The ban on gatherings and restrictions on personal proximity has made their business nearly impossible. Only home delivery of such meals is maintaining any semblance of activity.

As with all crisis situations, some opportunities can also be expected. Prior to COVID-19 we were seeing home delivery of groceries, but this has been a very difficult and slow development. Now that home delivery is so desirable, they are growing rapidly, and gathering the critical mass required to compete effectively with

supermarkets. Such services have a built-in market of elderly and disabled consumers that could benefit from such service. As on-line ordering and delivery becomes easier to use, the demand of this group should continue to grow long after the immediate threat has passed.

Perhaps more importantly, consumers are forming new habits and trying new approaches. Working at home might make preparing food at home more appealing. Once the learning curve is mastered, ordering groceries for home delivery might become more commonplace.

Many are concerned with storing staples for an extended quarantine. It should be noted that Canada is a

major exporter of pulses, beef, pork, wheat and canola. Canadians should not be concerned with long-term famine. The major concerns are with short-term supply chain breakdowns. The federal government recognized the need for coordination of food supply chains while in the midst of the BSE crisis in 2003 and started a Beef Value Chain Roundtable to facilitate communication between firms and between industry and governments. There are now value chain round tables for most of Canada's major food supply chains.

While industry may take time to adjust to drastic changes in consumer preferences, Canadians should not fear a total breakdown in the supply of food.

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Some of the great shots of life on the farm that the Lepp sisters of Rivers, Manitoba have posted on their instagram account, @thetulepps



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