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INSIDE PAGES B13-B15



Crops looking lush and green between Moosomin and Fleming.

Sask producers see conditions improving with timely rains

BY SPENCER KEMP
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

After a dry start to the growing season, producers across the region were concerned about what impacts the drought conditions could have on crops.

But thanks to some timely rains, including reports of over four inches of rain in some areas last week, conditions seem to be taking a turn for the better.

Duchek says conditions are improving

Blake Duchek farms in Atwater and Stockholm area. He says that thanks to the timely rains crops have been able to germinate and begin growing.

While the rains have been welcome so far, Duchek says that more will be needed as crops continue to grow.

"Things are looking okay right now. We've been getting the odd rain event here once in a while and it's been in a timely fashion, but we can always use more. Right now there's enough, but crops are starting to poke up above the stubble and they're going to be using a lot more moisture here in a bit because they're going to head out in about a couple of weeks, especially the wheat and the barley. We're going to need some timely rains then because we're still just running off the rains that we've gotten this spring because there's no subsoil moisture really," said Duchek.

"We've been getting a bit of moisture here and there but if that doesn't keep happening then it'll be a concern."

Flea beetles have been a concern for producers in the region as well but Duchek says that he hasn't needed to spray yet.

"I haven't seen any grasshoppers yet but flea beetles are a bit of a concern. Our canola is a little ahead of everybody else in the area and it will be okay. The very first quarter that we seeded near Esterhazy saw a few flea beetles and that almost had to be sprayed. But I've heard of some guys south of Esterhazy that had to do a lot of spraying. I've also heard some reports that some guys had to spray three times already just to get rid of flea beetles off of canola."

While we might be seeing warm sunny days now, Duchek says there was a concern for frost earlier in the month.

He says that so far his farm has been fortunate in avoiding frost, noting that his neighbors received some in mid-June.

Continued on page 9

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Fundraiser honours retirees' passion for field research

The Faculty of Agricultural and Food Sciences at the U of M has launched a fundraiser that is being championed by two recent retirees well-known to many in the Manitoba agricultural community.

Over his 33-year career at the University of Manitoba, Don Flaten has taught hundreds of diploma and degree students all about soil fertility and nutrient management. The professor known internationally as Dr. Phosphorus, Don is also a highly recognized researcher, well-known for his outreach efforts to the agricultural community, and was also a dedicated administrator, serving as the Director of the School of Agriculture for 12 years.

Alvin Iverson, the long-time manager of the Ian N. Morrison Research Station, also recently retired after 40-plus years in the faculty. A plant science graduate himself, Alvin has been the bedrock of the Department of Plant Science's Carman crop facility, always ensuring researchers and graduate students from across the faculty were well-equipped to conduct field trials. Alvin was also an integral organizer of the Manitoba Crop Diagnostic School, one of the Prairies' longest running and most successful field scouting workshops.

Those who know Don Flaten or Alvin Iverson can attest to their warmth and true concern for our students, friends and

colleagues.

Many have been privileged to know Alvin or Don in one way or another, and so to honour their deep impact on the Faculty and Manitoba's agricultural community people are being asked to support a project they are passionate about.

The project

The Ian N. Morrison Research Farm located in Carman, Manitoba, has been an important home to many of the faculty's education programs, research trials, and outreach activities. However, the Research Farm has a critical shortage of space to properly store essential field research equipment.

Don and Alvin have expressed their support for a new machinery storage building to address this fundamental need. The Carman Field Equipment Facility will sustain the crop production programs of researchers, graduate students, trainees and research collaborators across multiple disciplines, to ensure that they can continue to apply their research to real world challenges under field conditions.

Every dollar donated will be matched 2:1 by the faculty, and will directly enhance agronomic training, research and service in support of Manitoba's agri-food sector.

The News of 2021

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If you are thinking of selling your farm now or in the next year or two, it is a great time to list and market your farm. With record COMMODITY PRICES there is a great demand for farm land. Prices have increased. This is the lowest amount of land listings in Sask on the MLS system in 10 plus years. Not much competition with other land competing with yours. Now is the time—capitalize on the momentum.

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The story may be boring, but the yard is beautiful

With a big ‘whump’ against hubby’s truck window, road kill took on a whole new meaning and the twins (now 10) couldn’t wait for Grandpa to prep that prairie chicken for the grill. I mean really – how could one grown man and two youngsters get that excited about a dead bird? The twins were pumped that their dad was right into grilling all things ‘wild’ and supper that night was, in the twins’ minds, better than steak and lobster at a five-star restaurant.

It’s been a while since we finished seeding (end of May) so life has been a little less intense and life at the camper on the farm is near non-existent except for a night a week or so when we gather around the campfire and swat mosquitoes and pick woodticks off the dogs. Not that there are many this year for some reason, but the farm grandkids and I get right into it. Ticks don’t faze these kids in the least, unlike my early encounters with ticks when I, an Ontario-raised kid (no ticks there back then), froze in place at the thought of a tick on me, let alone at the thought of picking one off a pet. Now woodtick-picking is a form of relaxation. Imagine that!

With seeding behind us, we entered the next season, a season seldom spoken of but one that every farmer (well not me) gets right into. Crop checking. Crop checking starts the very second the air drill is parked in machinery row. I mean, immediately. And will I ever learn when hubby asks if I want to go for a drive that it’s not a lovely country drive where we stop to watch the sunset on the horizon – it’s more like start and stop at every field and every corner of every field to see if those teeny tiny seeds are germinating. It involves (on hubby’s part, not mine) getting down to look close and even do some digging to check on the germination. When someone asked me, after seeing my hubby down on his hands and knees in the field west of town at 5:30 one morning, if things were germinating okay I suggested he not say anything to my husband about how the canola on that field didn’t appear to be coming up all that well. And then there’s checking for flea beetles on those baby canola plants. Now that takes a “country drive” to a whole new level.

Okay, I get it. This is serious business. Stressful even. You spend tens upon tens of thousands of dollars getting that seed into the ground, checking that the air drill is seeding at just the right depth. Double checking that everything is working okay and heaven forbid you unknowingly have a section plugged and the seed and/or the fertilizer isn’t even reaching the ground. Now that’s a catastrophe in and of itself. Especially when half your land is adjacent to the highway for all the world to see. The way I look at it is stuff happens – you can’t ensure everything is 100 percent perfect all of the time. But I dare not say that to the men! Oh no! There can be nothing worse than a bare strip of land where bare should



not be. Ever. Anywhere.

Between spraying for weeds and those pesky flea beetles that can outright destroy an acre of canola in a day, and top dressing and fungiciding (not likely a word I’m guessing) and gopher destruction in one form or another, the time has come for us to get our sights on sand beaches and lake water. The fishing rods are packed, the camper is loaded and the grandkids who plan to come out to the lake for a week or two have added to my “lake” grocery list. They had to add chocolate bars since the first 44 I bought disappeared from the camper fridge in the first three weeks of seeding. Grandma has, however, learned her lesson. The chocolate bars for the lake are in the fridge at my house where they will remain until we finally pull out.

After judging 4-H speeches back in February, I finally had an opportunity to watch my farm grandkids’ 4-H presentations. As it was done virtually, all I needed was a copy of their videos (I didn’t judge their groups) and one lazy Saturday morning, I was able to sit back for an enjoyable few moments to hear what the grandkids had chosen for their topics. First one of the twins, then the other and then their sister (12) began. And wouldn’t you just know, this is what I heard: “The day my Grandma burned my 4-H Speech.” I thought perhaps that moment in time had disappeared from her memory but apparently not. And wow—she turned that ‘oops’ moment into a delightful, interesting speech that I was incredibly proud of (despite the fact that I was the centre of the unfortunate topic).

As time marches on and the grandkids can see the end of the school year, we were reminded once again of how Covid has affected our lives and the lives of our kids and grandkids. Our youngest grandchild just graduated from pre-K last week. I was a bit choked that I wasn’t invited until I heard this from her mom: “Only one person (parent) is allowed to attend Sophie’s graduation,” she said. “And guess who she chose? Her dad! Imagine. I don’t even get to go to her grad!” Thank goodness for photos and videos and all the technology that has helped us during this long year and a half. I will be the first to admit though that I will not miss all those Zoom meetings and I certainly won’t miss tossing those masks aside.

One night last week, as the farm grandkids and their parents and Grams and Gramps sat around the campfire at our “farm camping site,” we couldn’t help but

enjoy all the greenery. The green of the crops and the lawn and the trees – wow, it’s just nothing short of beautiful. And then we watched the full moon as it sat between a couple of very tall evergreen trees at the back of the yard. “Look at that, boys,” I said to the twins. “The trees are framing the moon.” And then I said, “And you know who planted every one of those trees?” And the rolling of the eyes began, two sets of eyes, almost identical and then in unison I heard, “Yeah, Yeah, Grandma, you’ve told us a million times.” It seems a lifetime ago in some ways, and just yesterday in other ways – the planting of the

trees when I was but 25 years old with three babes of my own underfoot. The story may be boring but the yard is beautiful if I do say so myself. And now it’s time to get away from the farm and get a little relax time in. The lake is calling and I am heeding the call. Here’s hoping all our farmer friends and all our readers have a moment to take in some downtime and reconnect with family and friends!!

A book of Donna Beutler’s amazingly funny columns is available at the World-Spectator for a mere \$10. It’s worth many times that amount, we assure you!



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USask agricultural researcher receives \$2.5 million in support from federal, provincial governments

University of Saskatchewan (USask) researcher Dr. Yongfeng Ai (PhD) has been awarded \$2.5 million through the Canadian Agricultural Partnership to improve the processes of transforming pulses into novel food ingredients, new bioplastics, and high-value biomedical materials.

"Today's investment will stimulate further development and growth in the Saskatchewan pulse and value-added industries by identifying new ways to process pulse starch," said Saskatchewan Minister of Agriculture, the Honourable Dave Marit. "This research will bring us closer to a number of the goals outlined in Saskatchewan's Plan for Growth. These include our targets to process 50 per cent of Saskatchewan pulse crops in the province and increase value-added agriculture revenue to \$10 billion."

The funding is part of Saskatchewan's Strategic Research Initiative Program, which announced its theme of Pulse Starch Utilization in 2020.

"This project will build the university's reputation as a leading research institution, working to highlight Canada's innovation ecosystem on the global stage," said USask Vice-President Research Baljit Singh. "Dr. Ai's work demonstrates the clear potential for the development of value-added pulse products to industry and the public at large."

Pulse starches display a wide variety of traits that make them unique from other botanical sources. They can develop into biogels of various physical forms, tolerate high-temperature processing, and are a good source of resistant starch—a new type of dietary fibre and prebiotic. The strong gelling and film-forming ability of pulse starches can make them useful in bioplastics and biomedical materials, such as packaging materials, fabric fibres, hemostasis materials, and wound dressing.

More importantly, the derived bioproducts are highly biodegradable and compostable, which can make them a sustainable option for producing easily disposable products in the future.

As a faculty member in the College of Agriculture and Bioresources and the Ministry of Agriculture Endowed Research Chair in Carbohydrate Quality and Utilization, Ai will explore these new applications for Saskatchewan pulse starches, and streamlining the conversion processes from newly harvested pulses, including peas, faba beans, lentils and chickpeas, to high-value food, bioplastic and biomedical products.

The research will be conducted in USask laboratories, and in conjunction with USask's Crop Development Centre, Departments of Animal and Poultry Science and Chemical and Biological Engineering, Food Pilot Plant, Fermentation Pilot Plant, and Bioprocessing Pilot Plant; Saskatchewan Pulse Growers; Saskatchewan Agri-Food Innovation Centre; University of Manitoba; Alberta Food Processing Development Centre; and the Canadian International Grains Institute.

Other USask researchers involved in the project include professors Dr. Michael Nickerson (PhD), Dr.



University of Saskatchewan (USask) researcher Dr. Yongfeng Ai. Photo: Gord Waldner

Tom Warkentin (PhD), Dr. Bunyamin Tar'an (PhD), Dr. Bishnu Acharya (PhD), Dr. Darren Korber (PhD), Dr. Takuji Tanaka (PhD), Dr. Denise Beaulieu (PhD), and Dr. Malcolm Xing (PhD); University of Manitoba.

The aim of Saskatchewan's Strategic Research Initiative Program is to advance priorities within the agriculture industry and to foster the development of Saskatchewan's agricultural value-added sector. Funding is awarded annually by the Agriculture Development Fund Advisory Committee.

These USask-led agricultural projects were also awarded funding through the Government of Saskatchewan's Ministry of Agriculture:

- Crop Development Centre—Enhanced Breeding and Soil Science Facilities

- Bobbi Helgason (PhD), Department of Soil Science—Saskatchewan Case Studies in Regenerative Agriculture

- Jill Hobbs (PhD), Dr. Eric Micheels (PhD) and Kathy Larson, Department of Agricultural and Resource Economics—Evaluating price impacts of stated weaned calf traits and value-added management

- Pierre Hucl (PhD), Department of Plant Sciences—Agronomic Tools to Increase Stem Solidness for Protection from Wheat Stem Sawfly.



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Farm debt growth slowed in 2020; Appreciation falls below farm revenue

BY LEIGH ANDERSON, SENIOR ECONOMIST WITH FCC

Canadian farm debt outstanding continued to increase in 2020 as producers invested in land, buildings and equipment. Overall farm debt rose 5.9 per cent to \$121.9 billion (Figure 1)—the lowest increase since 2014 and below the 10-year average of 6.5 per cent.

Strong demand for agriculture commodities, notably grains and oilseeds and increased delivery opportunities supported growth in farm revenues of 8.1 per cent, outpacing growth in farm debt for the first time in the past six years.

As a result, the overall financial picture of Canadian agriculture improved slightly, better positioning the agriculture industry to cover annual debt and interest payments, notably farmland ownership costs. It's important to recognize that this isn't consistent across all sectors and regions of Canadian agriculture—total livestock revenue decreased nearly one per cent in 2020.

Looking forward, we project farm revenue to be record high in 2021 and outpacing expected growth in farm debt outstanding of around six per cent in

2021. However, current drought conditions, high construction costs and other economic factors could impact farm revenue and debt forecasts.

Managing working capital and farm debt obligations remain top priority

The Bank of Canada (BoC) overnight rate is expected to remain unchanged in 2021 at 25 basis points. The economic recovery looks to be gaining momentum as vaccination rates increase in Canada and around the globe. Expectations are for the BoC to increase the overnight rate in the second half of 2022 as Canadian inflation is trending above two per cent. However, we've already seen upward pressure for fixed interest rate products as long-term bond yields have increased through 2021.

It's important to monitor what the BoC does, and longer-term bond yields as the bond market determines fixed rate lending. Nonetheless, interest rates are expected to increase in the future, increasing debt servicing requirements.

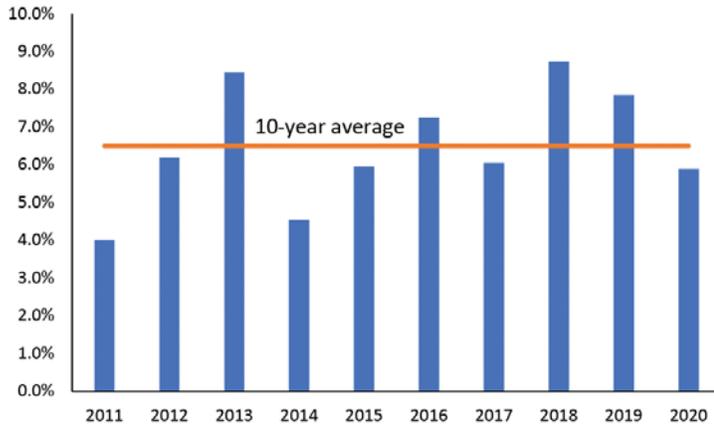


Figure 1. Canadian farm debt growth. Source: Statistics Canada

Implication of higher interest rates

The current Bank of Canada effective business interest rate of 2.29 per cent would result in \$2.8B in interest payments by

farmers. Assuming no debt increases in 2021, it would only take an increase of approximately 50 basis points (0.5 per cent) in interest rates to bring back farm interest payments to 2019 levels of \$3.4 billion reported by Statistics Canada. The expectation,

however, is that farm debt outstanding will increase approximately six per cent in 2021. The combination of a 50-basis point increase in rates and six per cent increase in debt would result in farm interest expenses rising over \$200 million.

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Ducks Unlimited Canada is all a-buzz over pollinators

Conservation group celebrates role pollinators play in healthy, sustainable landscapes



Want to bump up your crop yields? Then consider enhancing the pollination services available to you by adding natural areas on your farm. Research shows that healthy landscapes that host mixed natural areas including wetlands, grasslands, shelterbelts and ditch vegetation all aid in increased biodiversity and safe spaces for pollinators. And more pollinators means increased production of our crops and food.

Today is the start of National Pollinator Week, and Ducks Unlimited Canada (DUC) is celebrating the role these creatures, and the habitats they depend on, play in our lives. All week we're sharing stories, studies and

strategies on how and why we need to direct conservation efforts to help these important species.

"Mixed natural areas, in fact, play a very important role in providing resources to wild pollinators for nesting and foraging, especially when located in cropped landscapes," says DUC research scientist, Jim Devries, who also conducts research on pollinators for the organization. "And these pollinators return the favour. They help increase crop production through increased pollination. Maintaining places for pollinators to reside also benefits other beneficial insects, and biodiversity in general, including habitat for amphibians, mammals and birds."

Bees and other pollinators have a natural partnership with agriculture, and with crops like canola and soybeans, in particular. Many studies of insect pollination in canola demonstrate increases in yield. These results make a strong case for setting aside areas that benefit pollinators to further maximize crop production. And when we include mixed natural areas on the landscape, we all benefit from resulting carbon storage, biodiversity, increased soil retention, and water filtration.

"The contribution farmers and ranchers make in providing habitat for pollinators is significant and should be recognized," says Paul Thoroughgood, DUC's agriculture lead. "Natural areas, flowering crops such as canola, and wetlands all play a role in sustainable agriculture by providing for the needs of pollinators as well as the current and future health of our soil and water."

There are almost 1,000 bee species native to Canada and these tiny creatures significantly benefit from wetlands, grasslands and other natural areas. To support our local

pollinators, we can help by increasing the type and variety of flowers available to them. Providing a pollen- and nectar-rich mix of agricultural legumes is a good step, and that's why DUC started offering a Pollinator Pak seed blend as part of its new Marginal Areas Program on the Prairies.

Explore the conservation programs that aid in pollinator health at ag.ducks.ca or contact your local DUC office to learn about eligible programs options near you.



Channel clearing program now open for applications

The Saskatchewan Water Security Agency (WSA) is encouraging rural municipalities (RMs) and Conservation and Development Area Authorities (C&Ds) across Saskatchewan to take advantage of the largest channel clearing grant program ever provided by the province. Up to \$1.5 million is available in 2021-22—part of the provinces two-year \$2 million funding announced in March.

"We recognize the hard work of our rural communities in Saskatchewan and the impact a blocked watercourse can have, which is why we have increased support for the channel clearing program," Minister Responsible for the Water Security Agency Fred Bradshaw said. "The Water Security Agency has streamlined the program this year

and removed barriers to simplify the application process to better support our clients."

The channel clearing program assists RMs, C&Ds and Watershed Associations to remove debris, silt and beaver dams from natural watercourses to lessen the possibilities of blockages that can cause flooding to roadways and agricultural land.

"Keeping our natural waterways clear of obstructions like sediment and beaver dams is not only good for rural Saskatchewan and producers, but it also helps protect rural infrastructure," Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities President Ray Orb said. "SARM welcomes the WSA's expanded funding for channel clearing this

year and making the process to apply easier, which will certainly benefit communities in Saskatchewan."

WSA originally budgeted \$600,000 over two years for channel clearing. The increase in funding announced in March allowed for the program to grow to \$500,000 for the 2020-21 fiscal year. In 2021-22, funding increased again to \$1.5 million for a total investment of \$2 million over two years.

Constructed works for drainage or moving water are not eligible for the rebate. The deadline to apply is January 31, 2022.

For more information on the program please visit www.wsask.ca/Water-Programs/Channel-Clearing/.



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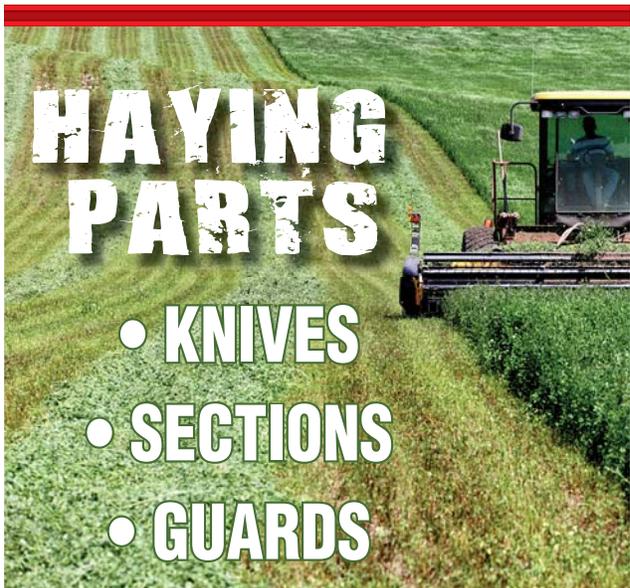
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Crop development normal for this time of year

Provincial crop report

This week, the north east and east central regions saw the most rain, with the highest amount reported in the Spruce Home and Rhein areas with 32 mm. The Barthel area reported 21 mm, the Turtleford and Meadow Lake areas reported 14 mm and Melfort reported 10 mm. Most farmers need more rain, especially in the southern and west central regions of the province, where it is needed to sustain crop and pasture growth.

Crop development is normal for this time of year in most areas, with oilseed crops reported as behind other crops. Provincially, 62 per cent of fall cereals, 81 per cent of spring cereals, 70 per cent of oilseed crops and 81 per cent of pulse crops are at a normal stage of development for this time of year.

Many areas of the province also experienced strong dry winds last week, resulting in crop damage, rapidly drying soils and delayed herbicide application. Delayed herbicide applications have allowed weeds to establish which has resulted in many areas moving past the point of effectively controlling them.

The topsoil moisture across the province is declining due to very high temperatures and non-stop winds. There were small reports of rain in the province with very few areas receiving enough to alleviate the stress caused by extremely dry conditions. Producers reported that dry conditions and cool temperatures have greatly slowed hay and pasture growth, with some concerned about their ability to support cattle throughout the summer without more rain.

Provincially, moisture levels on crop and hay and pasture land have fallen, particularly in areas that received little to no rainfall last week. Cropland topsoil moisture is rated as two per cent surplus, 56 per cent adequate, 36 per cent short and six per cent very short. Hay and pasture land topsoil moisture is rated as zero per cent surplus, 45 per cent adequate, 42 per cent short and 13 per cent very short.

Moderately warm temperatures have also helped with crop development, and farmers are hopeful with the recent rains that this will continue. The lack of rainfall across the majority of the province has delayed hay land growth and will likely delay the timing of the first cut, as well as reduce the yield.

Dry topsoil moisture conditions have resulted in de-



layed emergence and development of later and smaller seeded crops. There have been reports of flea beetle damage in most regions, affecting canola development for some.

Farmers have been busy spraying when they can, scouting fields and performing other farm tasks. There have been isolated reports of frost, mainly in the central and northern regions; damage is not yet known, but the crop of most concern is canola. There have also been reports of damage from flea beetle, cutworms, gophers and root rot diseases.

Southeast Saskatchewan

There was minimal rainfall in the southeast region last week, ranging from nil to eight mm in the Kisbey area. The Whitewood and Weyburn areas received four mm while the Radville and Carnduff areas received three mm. The Indian Head area has received the most precipitation in the region since April 1 (213mm).

Crop land topsoil moisture is rated as 78 per cent adequate, 19 per cent short and three per cent very short. Hay

and pasture land topsoil moisture is rated as 55 per cent adequate, 40 per cent short and five per cent very short.

Minimal rainfall this spring and cool temperatures at night have resulted in delayed growth, especially in hay and pasture land. Farmers have indicated that they may have a reduced hay yields and that their first cut may be delayed due to slow growth. Many are hoping for rain to help with crop, hay and pasture development.

Regionally, 54 per cent of the fall cereals, 82 per cent of the spring cereals, 80 per cent of the oilseed crops and 82 per cent of the pulse crops are at their normal stages of development for this time of year. Thirty-eight per cent of the fall cereals, 14 per cent of the spring cereals, 17 per cent of the oilseed crops and 10 per cent of the pulse crops are behind in crop development.

The wind quit blowing for most of the week, which allowed farmers to make progress spraying for weeds and insect pests such as flea beetle and cutworm. Across the region gophers have become a noticeable problem in both pasture and crop land with moderately sized areas impacted; farmers will be busy trying to keep the gopher population to a manageable size.

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Quick tips for on-farm trials

By TARYN DICKSON

On-farm research can be a powerful tool to test new products or practices under conditions specific to any one farm or area. Trials could be used in-season to test practices like nitrogen top-dress and sclerotinia stem rot fungicide, to give just two examples.

Here are the basic steps to generate results that provide a fair comparison:

Start with check strips

Put strips of treated versus untreated crop in a uniform part of the field. If a uniform area is not possible, choose an area of the field that reflects the field as a whole.

Replicate the strips

Try a few untreated and treated strips in the same block (four strips of each are ideal), in different areas of the farm and, ideally, in different years. This increases the confidence that differences between treatments are because of the treatments, and not because of chance variation is caused by differences in weather, soil and other factors.

Control other variables

If comparing a fungicide, for example, make sure the treated and untreated strips are the same variety, seeded the same day

with the same tool, and follow the same practices for fertilizer, weed control and harvest. If it's a fertilizer trial, have details soil sample results for the treatment area to rule out natural variation. That is another reason why multiple strips within a relatively uniform part of the field are important. Another consideration: If applying fungicide to a test area, spray perpendicular to the direction of seeding to ensure the same amount of wheel tracks throughout the trial. Apply to entire trial on the same day.

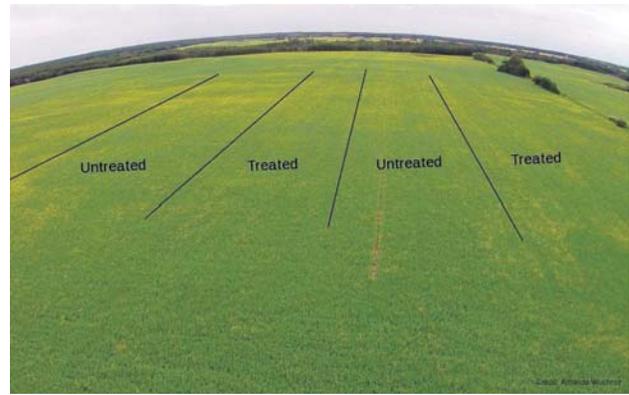
Weigh the results

Harvest all treatments on the same day. Ideally, the strips will be wider than the swather or combine header. Cut through the middle of each strip to avoid edge effects and combine each row separately. Use a weigh wagon to get the most accurate yield data for each strip. Measure the exact length and width of the strips. Make sure hopper is empty after each treatment.

Keep notes

Record weather conditions, soil moisture, seeding date, pest pressures, harvest date, harvest quality and anything else you can think of. That will help create scenarios where a product may or may not work.

This is a brief overview of the proto-



cols for on-farm trials. For more detailed tips, please go to canolacouncil.org/research/#onfarm-research.

Taryn Dickson is the resource manager for Crop Production and Innovation with the Canola Council of Canada. Taryn also manages the Canola Research Hub at canolaresearch.ca.

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Sask producers see conditions improving with timely rains

Continued from front

"Our area escaped the frost there earlier this week. We were down to plus five one night and plus three the other night there and we were able to escape that luckily, but there were some other crops I've heard of that got hit by frost. We've just been lucky," said Duchek.

Duncan hopes for more moisture

Kyle Duncan is a producer with crops around Rocanville. He says that the rains have been welcome but have led to uneven crops.

"We're just noticing canola crops are going to be coming up pretty uneven but things are coming alright. We can always use more rain yet too.

"I would say it's been pretty patchy and spotty in areas. There are areas where the timely rains have sure turned things around but then at the same time, we're still going to need more moisture to get a decent crop in the bins here. That's what's going on for us," Duncan explained.

Like many producers in the area, Duncan says he has had to deal with flea beetles that have thrived in the dry conditions.

Thanks to a quick response, Duncan says he was able to minimize damages to his crop.

"We had to spray for about 1,200 acres. We ran into a bit of an issue with them but we caught it and were able to turn the issue around just in time for the most part. We haven't had much outside of that for bug problems this year."

As the growing season continues, rain remains the most important thing for Duncan to ensure a bountiful harvest.

"Timely rains will always be the most important thing for us."

Hruska concerned about commodity prices

While some producers were concerned about dry conditions at the start of the seeding season, Kevin Hruska from Esterhazy was thankful for the dry conditions.

He says that because of the dryness,

seeding was not an issue.

"We weren't pissing and moaning about how dry it was here. We were actually relieved that the spring wasn't soaking wet and we didn't struggle to get any of our seeds in. We had a couple of little snows so we were never the ones moaning and groaning about it being dry, we were spared to some extent and we were confident that we'd have enough moisture for germination, which we did. We were quite happy with that," said Hruska.

"Seeding had ideal conditions. We had hardly popped the top off our beer bottles after seeding and we had two and a quarter inches of rain, so it was ideal and then we had a little break followed by another couple inches. We haven't had to complain up to this point, but like any other farmer when you have your crop growing and you run into 10 days without rain you start looking up to the sky again, so we'll never have perfect rains and we're always looking for another one."

Like most producers in the region, Hruska faces issues with subsoil moisture in parts of his land.

"Our farm spans over a drier zone to a more wet moisture-retaining zone and I was just out around there a few days ago and there were puddles in our field. Our other part of the farm would never hold that or reserve anything like that. So one side of our farm always wants a little more rain but it always grows good crops. Our reserves are from bare to very good."

Unlike other producers, however, Hruska says that flea beetles have not been an issue for his crop, attributing the lack of beetles to his seed treatment.

"We have run into issues with flea beetles in the past and we had a little damage this year but it wasn't nearly as much as what I heard in the rumor mill. But we use the best seed treatment available for flea beetles, it's a bit more expensive and I think it might save us. We have escaped the flea beetle pressure so far and I think it was because of our seed treatment and the timing. Our crop came up really quick because of our good germination, so when you have good germination and your canola comes up you have a good chance at beating the flea beetles."

Right now the biggest concern on Hruska's mind is the increasing price of commodities.

"Commodity prices have just skyrocketed," Hruska said.

"There are concerns in the ag community about what the cost of fertilizer is going to be, it's almost double at this point. So that's offsetting our glorious canola prices and everything. I think the word out there is we have very strong grain prices but inflation is absorbing that margin that you might think a farmer is getting."

McCarrison says more timely rains are necessary

Mark McCarrison farms just West of Moosomin and says that the recent rains and moist conditions have helped offset the difficult start to the year.

"Things are looking a lot better but we could really use some more timely rains. We got a lot of moisture when it came but it came too fast and some of the low spots got drowned out and then the higher areas are still too dry because the water came so quickly it just ran off the hills," McCarrison explained.

"Some of the lower areas now have some subsoil moisture but the higher areas are on the verge of drought, but with the rains that we've got they're holding on but we will need some more rain in the future."

He says that even with the recent rains, more will be needed for a successful season.

"Canola is definitely struggling but it's still coming along. Cereals are looking pretty good and we've been lucky staying just one step ahead of the drought, but we're definitely going to need some more moisture to fill the crops yet."

Bugs remain an issue for McCarrison, noting that there seem to be more flea beetles near Rocanville than around Moosomin.

"I've had to spray for some bugs and I've noticed a more concentrated bug problem in Rocanville, but as you get closer to Moosomin they get fewer and fewer. But I had to spray in Rocanville for bugs several times and I had to do some fields

in the Moosomin area once or twice," said McCarrison.

Even though more rain will be needed, McCarrison says he is thankful for the moisture so far.

Van Eaton thankful for timely rains

John Van Eaton is a producer with crops just outside Maryfield.

While Van Eaton welcomes the recent rains which have improved conditions drastically in the region, he says that timely rains will be necessary for a successful season.

"Certainly pastures and hay ground have improved and the rain has helped crops along but I don't think we're out of the woods yet. We started out the year with less-than-ideal subsoil moisture so we're going to be reliant on timely rains all season. As of right now, things are looking reasonable," said Van Eaton.

Subsoil moisture remains a concern as well, even after increased rainfall in the area.

"The big rain we got that we had that was around four inches had a lot of runoff and so that doesn't recharge the soil as far as an inch or two over a couple of days. The soil was quite dry though and it had the ability to absorb at least some of that."

Like other producers in the area, Van Eaton says that flea beetles have been a cause for concern but he feels that with how well canola has grown the beetles are no longer an issue.

"We did have to do a bit of extra spraying with flea beetles but not to the extent that we did last year but with the rains, we got the canola got going and got ahead of them for the most part, so I think we're out of the woods as far as that goes."

Van Eaton says that because of reduced subsoil moisture, timely rains will be needed throughout the rest of the season.

"Over the course of the growing season we're going to need these 'timely rains' as we call them, it makes us feel good about them, and we certainly need rain over the growing season and I don't think anybody would turn down an inch of rain again right now," Van Eaton explained.

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Top financial strategies for young farmers

Farming is an expensive business to be in, let alone break into. According to financial planning experts, as young farmers work towards ownership, they need to understand the importance of good record-keeping habits, as well as employing creativity in generating value from the business.

Though rather mundane, disciplined record-keeping practices are critical to knowing whether a business is profitable, says Terry Betker, president and chief executive officer for the prairie-based farm management consulting firm Backswath Management Inc. "It makes it easier to manage a larger business over time. The extension to that is, if you're actively involved in record-keeping, it builds a base of information and understanding for future decisions," Betker says. "Generally, I think it's about the timing of future cash flow needs. Being busy doing work and making regular payments is one thing—anticipating and preparing for future payments is another."

Paying GST quarterly is a tactic Yan Lafond, a Manitoba grain farmer, finds particularly helpful in keeping records up to date. Doing so ensures he thinks about finances with greater regularity and prevents him from pushing payments back. His farm business advisors also benefit. "I use AgExpert and try to do, bare minimum, quarterly updates. I do try to do it a bit more often if I can," Lafond says. "Being slightly more organized helps [my advisor] feel more at ease."

For Colin Sabourin, financial and investment advisor with Harbourfront Wealth Management in Winnipeg, building personal equity should be a priority from day one. Tough as it can be, doing so provides more business management options in the long term. "Try and put away \$10 dollars per acre. Don't just take the profits and buy a new truck," he says. "If you're struggling to get by, the number one priority is trying to make the farm successful." Betker expresses the same sentiment, adding the purchase of land—and efficiently paying debt—is one of the most effective options.

Land can be prohibitively expensive in some areas, however. Debt from land and equipment loans, a reality for many, needs to be leveraged in a way supportive of business goals—such as whether a loan will be floated for shorter term sales, or as a long-term asset. In these cases, Betker encourages young farmers to employ creativity. Buying machinery for custom work, cost-sharing assets with peers in similar circumstances, incorporating a small number of livestock into existing farm infrastructure, and just trying to save money wherever possible are all examples of creative equity-building. Generating off-farm income can also help pay the bills.

Regardless, keeping a budget and managing cash flow is critical. "Don't spend all your money. Having some of your own wealth, wherever that is, will be a good thing," he says. "Equity compounds on itself."



Spring Seeding photo contest winner

Kristen Heathcote is the winner of the World-Spectator's spring seeding photo contest! Kristen took this photo of Harry Wagstaff seeding wheat for Wagstaff Farms near Manson.

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Starting a construction project? How to stay focused and avoid any pitfalls



BY DALE W. LITT, SENIOR APPRAISER AND CLAUDE JACQUES, SENIOR APPRAISER
 Planning, communication, and monitoring your construction project can help in reducing costly overruns and time delays. Having a clear direction of the project and surrounding yourself with knowledgeable people will help you avoid construction project pitfalls.
 Here are some key details to consider when planning a construction project.

Develop a detailed project plan

Regardless of the construction project size, it helps to have a detailed project plan. Effective planning will help keep it on track and achieve desired results.
 As with any project, permits and approvals are required before any construction can take place. These can include approvals, building permits, zoning changes, and you might need to gather them from different authorities (conservation, ministry of transportation, municipalities).

Tendering and financing

Moving your project from concept to an actual structure will involve various professionals, including a design consultant, engineer and general contractor, who all play a role in the design process. Once your design is developed, you'll need a detailed specifications list to use for the tendering process.
 In the tender process, you'll go "to the market" and invite contractors, sub-contractors and suppliers to quote on specific work to be completed as well as materials. This is when detailed specifications are very important, and you must ensure that you're comparing "apples to apples" for each to avoid any unforeseen surprises during the construction process.

Managing a construction project can be one of the most challenging aspects of the entire building process. Establishing roles, responsibilities and accountabilities of all involved and ensuring effective communication between you, your contractor and trades is essential.

If you need to finance your construction project, consult with a lending institution of your choice to obtain pre-approval. Most lending institutions will require your detailed plan and quotes before approval.

Hire a general contractor or do it yourself?

Being your own general contractor and assuming the responsibility for project planning, hiring contractors and overseeing construction may save you money, but it's a considerable time commitment.

Consider hiring a General Contractor who's experienced working with sub-contractors who can help identify concealed or potential problems in the construction process. Or, if an owner doesn't have time or isn't confident keeping on top of the project, consider hiring a Project Manager. And the best scenario in times of rapidly rising prices is to establish a fixed-price contract.

Acting as your own General Contractor

- Pros**
- Saves costs if you're doing the labour
 - Better control over the project
 - Personal satisfaction of taking a role on yourself
- Cons**
- Major time commitment
 - Outside your abilities or a significant learning curve
 - Takes time away from your current operation

- Responsibility and stress fall back on you
- Could cost more if you underestimate costs due to lack of experience

Budgets and timelines

A critical piece of a construction project is an accurate and detailed budget. While it can reduce the likelihood of unexpected costs, there will always be some unforeseen expenses. So, your budget must include contingencies. An experienced General Contractor will help you develop an accurate budget with realistic timelines to reduce potential cost overruns and project delays.

Timelines

Detailed contracts with realistic timelines will ensure the project stays on track. Effective communication and regular reports will keep everyone on the same page and issues can be quickly identified and remedied if everyone knows the project status.

Common delays and cost overruns

- Most construction projects will experience some delays and cost overruns. The most common causes include:
- Underestimating costs without quotes
 - Hiring inexperienced or unqualified contractors
 - Lack of communication
 - Weather conditions
 - Delayed permit approvals
 - Material supply issues
 - Not locking in material prices—as they tend to rise over time
 - Unknown final costs (unless

- you have a guaranteed maximum)
- Contract discrepancies
 - Unforeseen site issues like excavation, road entrance, driveway, sewer/water/hydro etc.
 - Discrepancies in timeline vs. sub-contractor schedules
 - Changes to the plan after construction has started.
 - Omissions of permits, fees, temporary power, dumpsters, and site prep.
 - Incorrect assumptions due to unclear blueprints/drawings
 - Proper inspection and approvals at each project phase



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Renewed funding announced to build public trust in agriculture

The federal and provincial governments announced \$1.5 million over two years in renewed funding for Farm and Food Care Saskatchewan, Agriculture in the Classroom Saskatchewan (AITC-SK) and 4-H Saskatchewan. This funding will build public trust in agriculture and develop the next generation of agriculture leaders in Saskatchewan.

"Farmers work hard to take care of their land and animals, and, now more than ever, Canadians want to know where their food comes from," Marie-Claude Bibeau, Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food said. "The projects we are funding with Farm and Food Care Saskatchewan, Ag in the Classroom Saskatchewan and 4-H Saskatchewan will help bridge the gap between consumers and food processors, to help grow these relationships and provide trustworthy sources of information."

"Our relationship with these groups stems from a shared commitment to building public trust in our agriculture industry," Saskatchewan Agriculture Minister David Marit said. "These efforts to build meaningful connections with consumers, share agricultural resources with

classrooms, and prepare the next generation of agriculture leaders is essential to our thriving industry."

Farm and Food Care Saskatchewan connects consumers to food and farming through events, training and educational resources that build trust in Saskatchewan food production.

"With less than three per cent of the population having a direct tie to a farm or ranch, this funding is essential to our work to help build trust in food and farming in our province," Farm and Food Care Saskatchewan Chair Shawn Colborn said.

Agriculture in the Classroom Saskatchewan plays a pivotal role in educating youth about agriculture through hands-on activities, engaging programs and inquiry-based educational resources.

"The next generation of consumers is sitting in classrooms across the province, with their hands enthusiastically raised," AITC-SK Executive Director Sara Shymko said. "This funding is crucial to help keep up with the demand for agricultural learning experiences in our province and ensuring we are providing opportunities to answer student's questions about

where food comes from."

4-H Saskatchewan is one of Canada's largest youth organizations and provides members and leaders with learning experiences tailored to individual needs and interests through the motto "Learn To Do By Doing."

"This funding is an investment in the future of Saskatchewan agriculture," 4-H Saskatchewan's Council President Cameron Choquette said. "4-H is proud to deliver leadership programming that develops young people in our communities."

The governments of Canada and Saskatchewan recognize the agriculture sector is a key economic driver and are committed to investing in organizations that help consumers understand the industry and showcase its commitment to food

safety, animal health and the environment.

The two-year agreements will provide Farm and Food Care Saskatchewan with a total of \$300,000, 4-H Saskatchewan with \$600,000 and Agriculture in the Classroom Saskatchewan with \$610,000.

The Canadian Agricultural Partnership is a five-year, \$3 billion investment by Canada's federal, provincial and territorial governments to strengthen and grow Canada's agri-food and agri-products sectors. This commitment includes \$2 billion for programs cost-shared by the federal and provincial/territorial governments that are designed and delivered by provinces and territories. More than \$155 million of this funding comes from the Government of Saskatchewan.



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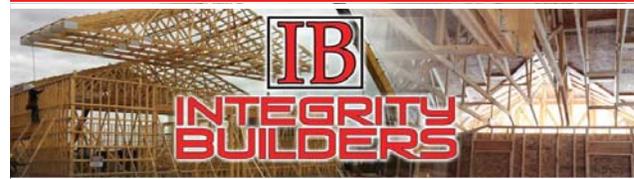

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chapplemax@gmail.com

 19 Broadway St E. Yorkton, SK - \$275,000 MLS# SK841056	 12 3rd Ave. North Yorkton, SK - \$324,000 MLS# SK84106	 34/36 Calwood Cr. Yorkton, SK - \$498,800 MLS# SK834469	 369 6th Ave. North Yorkton, SK - \$12/sq ft MLS# SK830667	 19 Broadway St E. Yorkton, SK - \$275,000 MLS# SK850466	 450 4th Ave. N Yorkton, SK - \$569,000 MLS# SK844822	 1301C Park Ave. Esterhazy, SK - \$265,000 MLS# SK842964
 29-31 2nd Ave. N. Yorkton, SK - \$1,000/mo MLS# SK842825	 129 McAllister Ave. Porcupine Plain, SK - \$360,000 MLS# SK817484	 14 12 3rd Ave. N. Yorkton, SK - \$12/sq. ft MLS# SK842835	 RM of Moosomin 100 acres 88 cult - \$599,000 MLS# SK841046	 RM of Dundurn 160 acres - \$325,000 MLS# SK815326	 803 Sussex Ave Esterhazy, SK - \$400,000 MLS# SK845049	 316 Vincent Ave. E. Churchbridge, SK - \$155,000 MLS# SK850335
 302 Limit Ave. Stockholm, SK - \$239,000 MLS# SK849551	 173 5th Ave. Esterhazy, SK - \$629,000 MLS# SK849433	 Wandy Acreage RM 181 Langenburg, SK \$335,000 MLS# SK846581	 1129 Kaposvar Dr. Esterhazy, SK - \$239,000 MLS# SK842090	 730 Rupert Pl. Esterhazy, SK - \$285,000 MLS# SK838473	 1030 Assiniboia Ave. Grayson, SK - \$226,000 MLS# SK841092	 Borsa Farm RM of Moose Range #486 \$3,250,000 MLS# SK851443
 Cherewyk Home Quarter RM of Sliding Hills #273 \$799,000 MLS# SK858975	 Lake Acreage RM of Spy Hill #152 - \$660,000 MLS# SK858895	 NEW LISTING 1106 Arcola St. Esterhazy, SK - \$182,500 MLS# SK860648	 NEW LISTING 200 1st Ave. Gerald, SK - \$149,900 MLS# SK859210	 NEW LISTING 521 Smith-Darrien Ave. W. Esterhazy, SK - \$171,000 MLS# SK858980	 NEW LISTING 220 2nd Ave. Esterhazy, SK - \$223,900 MLS# SK858483	 NEW LISTING 1 Yarbo Road Yarbo, SK - \$119,000 MLS# SK858440
 NEW LISTING 511 Arundel Ave. S. Bredenbury, SK - \$129,000 MLS# SK856656	 805 Stanley St. Esterhazy, SK - \$195,000 MLS# SK858469	 Qu'Appelle Valley Acreage Round Lake, SK - \$428,000 MLS# SK852462	 NEW LISTING 3 Big Bay Esterhazy, SK - \$239,000 MLS# SK852270	 12 Ball Crescent Esterhazy, SK - \$119,900 MLS# SK860538	 CONDITIONAL 1134 Corning Ave Esterhazy, SK - \$419,000 MLS# SK858890	 NEW LISTING 436 Stanley St. N Esterhazy, SK - \$109,000 MLS# SK856553
 CONDITIONAL 1016 1st Ave. Esterhazy, SK - \$129,900 MLS# SK854282	 REDUCED PRICE 509 Babyak St. Esterhazy, SK - \$139,000 MLS# SK838846	 300 1st Ave. Gerald, SK - \$137,000 MLS# SK838073	 CONDITIONAL 209 Princess Dr. Gerald, SK - \$49,900 MLS# SK830124	 1125 Broadview Rd. Esterhazy, SK - \$249,900 MLS# SK817041	 603 Stanley St. Esterhazy, SK - \$259,000 MLS# SK816959	 NEW LISTING 278 4th Ave. N Yorkton, SK - \$139,900 MLS# SK859115