The Division of Agriculture Activities

August 6, 2014
Find us on the web at:
http://dnr.alaska.gov/ag

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To add or remove your name from our newsletter list click here.

Questions or Comments?
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Director's Note

August is always a busy time of year in Alaska as summer's halfway mark is behind us and we race toward fall. With fall harvest just around the corner hopefully the weather clears in the Fairbanks area, holds in the Mat-Su, and cooperates on the Kenai and Kodiak so Alaskan farmers have a bountiful crop.

This month's newsletter is lengthy but includes information on agritourism, upcoming events, deadlines and opportunities. If you are interested in exploring exports be sure to read about and register for the upcoming Export Workshop. If you are a producer in South East, don't miss the opportunity to attend the On-Farm Food Safety Workshop to be held in Ketchikan on August 21st. Do you want to meet the new superintendent of the Matanuska Experiment Farm? If so, plan on attending the Alaska Agriculture Appreciation Day at the Farm, Thursday, August 7th from 12-5 pm. Do you want to learn about Elodea and treatment efforts around the state? Mark your calendar for August 12th. Are your animals involved in local Fair activities? If so, don't miss the article by Division of Environmental Health on Biosecurity for Your Animals While Attending the Fair. All of this and more is available in this month's newsletter.

As always, if you have any questions or concerns please give me a call at 907-761-3867 or send me an email at franci.havemeister@alaska.gov.

~Franci Havemeister

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Agriculture Calendar

- Thur. **Aug. 7th** — **Alaska Agriculture Appreciation Day at the Farm.** Matanuska Experiement Farm, 1509 S. Georgeson Dr., Palmer. noon - 5 pm. *Details:* here
- Tue. **Aug. 12th** — **Public Meeting Notice: Elodea in Sand Land Lake.** Sand Lake Elementary cafeteria, Anchorage . 6:30 - 8 pm. *Details:* here
- Wed. **Aug. 20th** — **2014 WUSATA Explore Exporting Seminar.** Location to be announced, Homer. 9 am - 4:30 pm. *Details:* here
- Tue. **Aug. 26th** — **Board of Agriculture & Conservation Meeting.** Division of Agriculture, 1800 Glenn Highway, Suite 12, Palmer. 1 pm. *Details:* here
- Thur. **Aug. 28th** — **Alaska Grown Day at the Alaska State Fair.** Alaska State Fair, Palmer. *Details:* here

If you have an event that you would like to add to the calendar, please contact Lora Haralson.

Marketing Section

Considering Agritourism on Your Farm?

Agritourism has been defined as activities that include visiting a working farm or any agricultural, horticultural, or agribusinesses operation to enjoy, be educated, or be involved in what is happening on the farm (Agricultural Marketing Resource Center). This includes farm tours for families or schools, day camps, hay rides, corn-mazes, U-Picks and so much more. Across the country, agritourism is becoming more and more popular as families are trying to reconnect with where their food comes from.

Many Alaskan farms already have components of agritourism in their operation, but there is a wide array of untapped potential that **could help increase a farm's income**. For example, a farm that already has a U-Pick in place can create events centered around the U-Pick and fall festivals and holidays such as Halloween. The farm could feature a kid's night at the U-Pick where parents pay to go to the farm and enjoy activities like haunted hay rides, vegetable painting, horse shoes, and other kids' activities scattered throughout the U-Pick.

The following link attaches to the article "Growing Luck and the NAFDMA Influence," which tells the story of one Tennessee family exploring agritourism and how it has helped their operation.

The article can be found at: http://eatlocalalaskagrown.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/NAFDMA-Article-Summer-14.pdf

This article was provided by Farmers Inspired Magazine: Summer 2014 edition and the North American Farmers Direct Marketing Association (www.farmersinspired.com).

Farm to Restaurant Fact Sheet

Ever wondered if you could sell your products to restaurants? Well you can!

To help farmers and ranchers navigate all the rules and regulations, the Alaska Division of Agriculture, in collaboration with the Department of Environmental Conservation, have created a Farm to Restaurant Fact Sheet. This fact sheet is full of information on **how to get your products into restaurants** and who to contact with specific questions.

This factsheet covers fruits and vegetables, meat, poultry, dairy, and eggs. You can find the factsheet on the Division of Agriculture website at: http://dnr.alaska.gov/ag/FactSheets/FarmtoRest2014.pdf

Land Sales & Grazing Leases

http://dnr.alaska.gov/ag/ag_sales.htm

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Alaska Grown Restaurant Rewards 2014-2015

Spread the news! Restaurant Rewards 2014-2015 has officially begun.

Participating restaurants will be reimbursed 20% of the purchase price for all Alaska Grown specialty crops purchased. Specialty crops include: vegetables, herbs, fruits, honey, jam, jelly, syrup, and flowers. Restaurants should always double check with their supplier to make sure they're purchasing Alaska Grown because restaurants will not be reimbursed for non-Alaska Grown purchases.

All foodservice, except for schools and other entities who use Nutritional Alaskan Foods in Schools funds, are eligible to sign up with Restaurant Rewards.

Restaurants must fill out a new application for every Restaurant Rewards cycle. The 2014-2015 cycle runs from July 1, 2014 to June 30, 2015.

During Restaurant Rewards 2013-2014, 30 restaurants signed up for the program and 19 of those restaurants participated. $138,390.82 worth of Alaska Grown specialty crops were purchased and reimbursed by the program with 20 Alaska Grown Farmers indicated as sources of these specialty crops purchases. We would love for more restaurants to participate and see more Alaska Grown Farmers products being purchased.

Go to the Restaurant Rewards website for more information:
http://dnr.alaska.gov/ag/ag_RR.htm

The application can be found at:
https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/RR14-15Application

Congratulations to Flying Squirrel Bakery Café for winning the Restaurant Rewards: Go the Distance Contest!

Flying Squirrel Bakery Café has made a commitment to using as many local products as they can. They feature Alaska Grown products proudly in their dishes and strive to make sure their customers know where their ingredients come from. Flying Squirrel Bakery Café is located in Talkeetna, so stop by and check out how they support Alaska Grown.

Contact Jacquelyn Schade for more information at 907-761-3858 or email Jacquelyn.Schade@alaska.gov

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FARM TO SCHOOL UPDATE

SUSITNA ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Susitna Elementary School is one of the 2014 Farm to School Grant recipients and things are in full swing on their project. The goals of this project were as follows:

- Increase student interest in science
- Support healthy eating and sustainability concepts at students homes
- Collaborate, learn from, and teach with nearby schools, gardeners, and farmers.

The Susitna PTA and Susitna Optional Parent Group hosted a Garden Party at the end of May and built two cedar beds, planted with potatoes, carrots, radishes, and more. Parents volunteered all summer to water and weed, also cleaning up two old beds, and planting potatoes and sunflowers. When students return to school they will have the opportunity to harvest.

Understanding the impact of these projects is best illustrated with testimonial from involved parents. Parent, and new PTA president, talks about the difference this project has made for one student.

"We had a Susitna friend visit us this weekend. She is going into fourth grade and she's one of the reasons we're all working so hard on this garden. She has never grown anything before, and never eaten fresh-from-the-garden anything. She told me, in great detail, about the day she and her mom helped plant those gardens. She talked her mom into driving over to the school one day to look at the beds, and told me about the potatoes she is looking forward to seeing. She's incredibly excited about growing things, and looking forward to harvesting this fall. I'm excited to be a very small part of teaching her about sustainability, horticulture, and connection to the earth. Thank you for making that possible for her, and for me."

AIRPORT HEIGHTS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Airport Heights Elementary School is another 2014 Farm to School Grant recipient and their artwork is telling a great story. The goals of this project were focused on learning:

- Students will learn about greenhouse operations and plant ecology
- Students will grow and eat Alaska Grown produce
- Students will read, write, and draw what they learn

Students are learning about greenhouse operations because they are building one at their school next year. It will be a school-community project. Recently students took a field trip to Green Connection in Anchorage and will be visiting another Greenhouse in the Mat Su valley this fall. Visiting these greenhouses will give them lots of ideas and knowledge for when they build their own next year. We are excited they shared pictures of their artwork with us and we look forward to seeing what happens next year!

Sample artwork from Airport Heights Elementary School Students

To learn about past year projects check out our Mini-Grant Reports on the Division of Agriculture, Farm to School website: http://dnr.alaska.gov/ag/ag_FTS.htm

Students from Airport Heights Elementary School have a plant ecology lesson at Green Connection

For updates, news, grant opportunities, and announcements join our listserv at: http://list.state.ak.us/soalists/akfarmtoschool/jl.htm. For more information about the Alaska Farm-to-School program, or if you have any questions, contact Johanna Herron at Johanna.Herron@alaska.gov or (907) 761-3870.

Mt. McKinley Meat & Sausage

http://dnr.alaska.gov/ag/ag_mmms.htm

Frank Huffman 907-745-5232
Frank.Huffman@alaska.gov

PRICE REDUCED
for
Alaska State Fair Ag Day Pavillion
ONLY $50!
More info here:
http://dnr.alaska.gov/ag/Marketing/AKGDay.pdf

Farmers and Ranchers in Alaska can enroll in the Reimbursement Transportation Cost Payment Program (RTCP) beginning on July 21, for fiscal year 2014

RTCP enrollments for fiscal year 2014 will begin on July 21, 2014, and end on Sept. 8, 2014. Applicants must submit their application to their administrative county FSA office by Sept. 8, 2014. Applicants will have until Nov. 3, 2014, to provide supporting documentation.

For more information on the RTCP program, please contact the Northern or Southern County FSA Offices for further assistance or the Alaska website: http://www.fsa.usda.gov/ak

WUSATA INVITATION

Explore Exporting Workshop
August 20th, 2014
Homer Alaska

Don't miss out on this exciting opportunity! With 95.5% of the world's consumers living outside of the U.S., sign up and discover how exporting can drive your future sales growth.

Led by industry experts, the workshop will feature resources on how to begin this great endeavor.

Register HERE today!

On-Farm Food Safety Workshops

ATTENTION KETCHIKAN AREA PRODUCERS!

On August 21, 2014, The Alaska Division of Agriculture will offer a free On-Farm Food Safety Workshop at the Small Business Development Center in Ketchikan. All growers are welcome to come and learn more about Good Agricultural and Handling Practices (GAP/GHP) principles, USDA GAP/GHP audits, risk analysis at your growing facility and distribution area, creating a Food Safety Plan with FamilyFarmed.org's new online tool, and a variety of other post-harvest produce handling topics. If you are a producer or vendor, small or large, and are interested in food safety issues, this workshop is for you.

Comments from participants at the first workshop included:

"Great at answering our questions right away with a very diverse group"

"Very helpful – knowledge is power to move ahead in the right direction"

The workshop will consist of presentations on water quality, compost, and other soil amendments, hygiene practices at farm facilities, and safe storage and transport of your produce to market. We will also help you learn how to take advantage of marketing opportunities at schools and institutions. In addition, a hands-on mock food safety exercise at a local farm or greenhouse will be conducted to allow participants to see how food safety techniques can be implemented in their own facilities.

The workshop will run from 10am to approximately 2pm, with a short break for lunch. All attendees will receive resources to assist them with safe produce growing practices, including a copy of FamilyFarmed.org's book "Wholesale Success – A Farmers' Guide to Food Safety, Selling, Postharvest Handling, and Packing Produce." All attendees will receive a certificate for three Continuing Education Units for attending.

If you are interested in attending this free workshop, please contact Linda Koons Auger, SBDC Ketchikan Center Director, to sign up! (907) 225-1388, linda.koonsauger@aksbdc.org

Plant Materials Center

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Plant Materials Center

PMC Invasive Weeds Staff Manage Canada Thistle

Canada thistle has been managed in the Anchorage area for the past several years; quantifying large infestations along roadways and manually or mechanically trying to reduce these infestations. However, this persistent weed is, well...persistent. Results from last year's studies have concluded that although seed prevention is effective for reducing spread of new satellite infestations, it is the hearty rhizomes that create lateral spread of larger infestations. At one site, lateral spread was calculated to be about 7 feet from 2012 to 2013. A new strategy for reducing these large sites needed to be implemented in 2014.

Gary Lund of Chugach Yard Care staff sprays herbicide on Canada thistle priority sites in an effort to prevent spreading to agricultural land.

PMC Invasive Weeds staff have recently been using EPA and Alaska registered herbicides on one of Alaska's most threatening agricultural invasive weed: Creeping or Canada thistle. Staff have contracted work with Chugach Yard Care for the application of herbicides on priority State owned Right-of-Ways sites. This year is the first year we've been able to implement the work in areas that have a high potential for spread to critical agricultural lands, including main highways in the Anchorage area out to the Matanuska-Susitna Valley. Chugach Yard Care staff have been enthusiastic to work with the Division of Agriculture after having experience working with DOT in mowing services and JBER with landscaping projects. Large priority sites are carefully monitored throughout the season to confirm effectiveness of this management decision and minimize non-target impacts. PMC staff are excited to evaluate both the short and long term progress at these priority sites.

If you would like more information on the project, please contact Heather Stewart at heather.stewart@alaska.gov.

Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation:

Division of Environmental Health

Biosecurity For Your Animals While Attending the Fair

- Prepare for the trip by properly cleaning the trailer and consulting with your veterinarian or fair staff about health requirements, vaccinations, and diseases of concern. Pack all cleaning equipment, feed, and health supplies you might need while attending the fair.

- It's good to make new friends at the fair but try to limit strangers from direct contact with your animals. Use only your own equipment, grooming supplies, and feeding and watering equipment. If you find that you need to borrow or share equipment make sure it is cleaned and disinfected prior to use. Contagious diseases can be transmitted through contact, including direct nose-to-nose contact among livestock, as well as your animal's contact with surfaces that an infected animal might have contaminated with saliva, respiratory secretions, or manure.

- Create a clean environment for your animals during a show or fair. Make sure the stalls or cages are fully cleaned and disinfected and keep the area and bedding clean. That is an important part of good animal husbandry.

- While at the fair monitor your animals for signs of illness. During the fair, keep a daily record of your animal's behavior: monitor feed and water intake, make sure the manure looks normal, and watch for other signs of illness. If you have any questions ask the fair staff or your veterinarian. Be prepared you may need to take your animal's body temperature.

- When you travel home after the fair, segregate the fair animals from other livestock on your farm. An animal that has been at a show or event may look healthy but could have been exposed to a pathogen and be incubating an illness. So if you can isolate the livestock from other animals on the farm for several days (five to seven days is generally adequate), and watch closely for any signs of illness during this time: depression, abnormal manure, lack of appetite, elevated body temperature.

The fair staff and 4-H leaders have taken many precautions to limit the risk for disease exposure at the fair, but you need to do your part to keep your animals healthy. If you have any questions contact fair or 4-H staff, or call your veterinarian.

Environmental Health

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New Superintendent at the Matanuska Experiment Farm

Story contributed by Nancy Tarnai

"Agriculture is a subject I am really passionate about," says Angie Freeman Shephard, new superintendent at the Matanuska Experiment Farm.

Introducing Angie Freeman Shephard, the new superintendent at the Matanuska Experiment Farm.

Freeman Shephard grew up on an eastern Oregon farm and is a fifth generation landowner in the Palouse region near Moscow, Idaho. She worked the fields and drove a combine, helping her family raise wheat and peas.

Freeman Shephard earned a bachelor of science degree in rangeland ecology and management from Oregon State University and ranched in eastern Oregon for the next 12 years, raising beef cattle and managing timberland.

Wanting to learn more about riparian grazing and not finding adequate research, she went to the University of Idaho and earned a master of science degree in natural resources management with a range emphasis. Conducting research through the Oregon Agricultural Experiment Station, Freeman Shephard first crossed paths with Norman Harris, administrator of the Matanuska Experiment Farm.

After completing her graduate studies, she served the next three and a half years as project manager of the Zumwalt Prairie Preserve for the Nature Conservancy. Her work included prescribed burns, weed treatment, and grazing studies. "It was great to work with a conservation organization that worked with agricultural producers," she said.

Because her husband, Phil Shephard, was from Alaska and wanted to return home, the couple and their three children headed north six years ago. In Anchorage, Freeman Shephard was a grants officer for Providence Hospital, obtaining funds to support the hospital's charity work.

When she saw the notice for the farm superintendent position, she quickly took action. "It looked like a good fit for me," she said. "I'm excited to learn more about the rich history of agriculture in Alaska, specifically the Matanuska Valley. I want to help be part of the team that finds resources, be a good host to research and outreach activities, and provide public service.

"There are a lot of creative people studying interesting things here. My goal is to see what I can bring to help people to address the challenges and opportunities of sustainable agriculture in Alaska."

Freeman Shephard enjoys hiking, camping, and playing the guitar in her free time, but mostly she loves participating in family activities.
She can be reached at 907-746-9481.

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This column is provided as a service by the UAF School of Natural Resources and Agricultural Sciences and the Agricultural and Forestry Experiment Station.
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ALASKA AGRICULTURE APPRECIATION

SNRE School of Natural Resources and Extension

agricultural & forestry experiment station afes

Cooperative Extension Service, University of Alaska Fairbanks

Day at the Farm

Thursday, Aug. 7
noon to 5 p.m.

Free!

Matanuska Experiment Farm
1509 S. Georgeson Drive, Palmer

- Plowing demo with the Antique Power Club
- Goat milking
- Animals from the Alaska Wildlife Conservation Center
- Rain garden presentation
- Live music by members of the Overby Family Band & the Colony High School band
- Bug identification
- Cooking demos in the new Extension classroom
- Tips for growing in high tunnels
- Kids' activities and MORE!

Stop by the Cooperative Extension Service
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UAF University of Alaska Fairbanks

For more information, contact Theresa Isaac at 907-746-9450.

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