The Division of Agriculture Activities

September 2, 2015
Find us on the web at:
http://dnr.alaska.gov/ag

Director's Office

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

Questions or Comments?
E-Mail or call 907-761-3864.

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www.facebook.com/dnr.alaskagrown

Director's Note

The summer of 2015 was a memorable one in Alaska. With near record forest fires, little rainfall, and daytime temperatures that hovered in the 80's the fall season brings with it a mixture of relief and gloom. Relief in that it will bring closure to the intense fire; but gloom in that our 80 degree days are behind us and the dark winter months ahead.

Every August, Senator Stoltze organizes a legislative farm tour; inviting legislators, staffers, and state agency personal to spend a morning and afternoon visiting farms and facilities and getting a firsthand look at Alaskan agriculture. This year's tour had 45 in attendance and included 4 stops; the first of which was an overview and then a question and answer period, and a tour of Mt. McKinley Meat & Sausage.

Next stop was Glacier Valley Farm, where attendees viewed an impressive zucchini field and were treated to delicious strawberries from the patch; Palmer Produce was the third stop – Paul Huppert gave an overview of his operation and the group witnessed potatoes being transferred from trucks to storage.

The final stop was at Little Pitchfork Ranch which included lunch with the 2015 Farm Family of the year recipient, Todd Pettit.

For those of you interested in the Waters of the United States (WOTUS), a federal district judge for the District of North Dakota issued a preliminary injunction last Thursday, August 27th against the implementation of the WOTUS rule. The rule was scheduled to become effective August 28th. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) announced that it will move forward with the implementation in the 37 states that are not party to the lawsuit. The 13 states that are party to the lawsuit – and which EPA has said it will leave the former regulation in place include Alaska, Arizona, Arkansas, Colorado, Idaho, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Mexico, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Wyoming. Judge Ralph Erickson found the states have a "substantial likelihood of success on the merits" in their challenge of the EPA rule. The court further found that, "Once the Rule takes effect; the States will lose their sovereignty over intrastate waters that will then be subject to the scope of the Clean Water Act." The plaintiffs in the case have disputed EPA's assertion that the injunction only applies to the 13 states and have asked the judge to make it clear that the injunction applies nationally.

Legislators touring Mt. McKinley Meat and Sausage.

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

~ Franci Havemeister

"Winter is an etching, spring a watercolor, summer an oil painting, and autumn a mosaic of them all." ~ Stanley Borowitz

Marketing Staff

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

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Agriculture Calendar

- Wed., **Sept. 9** — **Board of Agriculture and Conservation Meeting Notice**
  1800 Glenn Highway, Suite 12, Palmer. 2pm *Details:* here

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

Marketing Section

Alaska State Fair
2015 Farm Family of the Year

The Pettit family of
Little Pitchfork Ranch, Palmer,
has been selected by the Alaska agriculture
community as the 2015 Alaska State Fair Farm Family of the Year.
The Pettit family was honored at the Alaska State Fair
on Thursday, August 27.

Jack and Jane Seeman of Lazy Mountain established Little Pitchfork Ranch in 1947 and are the grandparents of the Pettit family. The ranch originally was an oat and barley operation that evolved to include beef cattle and draft horses. In the mid-1980s Timothy hay was added to the production. Todd Pettit assumed ownership of the ranch in the mid-1990s.

When Todd arrived beef prices were low. Bison meat was becoming popular due to its health benefits and appeared to be the next logical step to expand the farm. Todd favored raising bison because they are somewhat self-sufficient and introduced them to the farm in 1998. Bison birth small calves, can eat snow for water, and are extremely efficient with their feed. Todd ensures his bison are socialized by interacting with them on a regular basis. Todd's wife Roxann has been experimenting with bison wool for 15 years. She processes the wool into fiber to make garments and small products, then sells the items locally.

Todd further expanded the ranch when elk prices were low by trading some hay for a bull elk and some heifer calves. Elk are now well-recognized as a meat breed and are a successful component of Little Pitchfork Ranch.

Congratulations to the entire Pettit Family. Your dedication to agriculture in Alaska is appreciated!

The Seemann and Pettit Family pose for a photo with their bison at Pitchfork Ranch on Lazy Mountain in Palmer. (*Photo credit - Ted Bell*)

Since January 2014, Todd has also managed the Windy Valley Musk Ox Farm that produces qiviut wool. Currently the farm is focusing on increasing the population and the genetic diversity of the musk ox.

The Pettits are very involved with their community and volunteer a lot of their time to the agriculture industry. The Pettits are founding members of the Alaska Diversified Livestock Association. Todd is the chair of the Palmer Soil and Water Conservation District, the president of the Alaska Association of Conservation Districts, has volunteered on the Agriculture Advisory Committee for the Alaska State Fair, the Alaska Division of Agriculture Plant Materials Center Advisory Board, and the Alaska Farmland Trust Board of Directors. Todd is also a member of the Mat-Su Chapter of the Alaska Farm Bureau.

FARM TO SCHOOL UPDATE

October is:

NATIONAL FARM to SCHOOL MONTH

Over the past decade, the farm to school movement has exploded across the United States, reaching millions of students in all 50 states and Washington, D.C. From school gardens and farm field trips to local food on cafeteria trays, farm to school practices help children learn about where food comes from and make healthier choices while also creating new markets for local and regional farmers.

"Farm to school is an important tool in the fight against childhood obesity and food insecurity," says Anupama Joshi, executive director of the National Farm to School Network (NFSN). "There are economic benefits as well. During the 2012 school year, local food purchases by schools returned over $385 million back to local economies."

This year we encourage everyone to participate in a Farm to School event in your community as you see fit. For the third year in a row we will work in collaboration with Department of Early Education and Development, Child Nutrition Programs, to launch a Local Lunch Day in each of the school districts around the state. There will also be a contest of some sort on the National level which we will share with everyone on the Farm to School listserv. To sign up for the listserv go to:

http://list.state.ak.us/soalists/akfarmtoschool/jl.htm

For any other questions about Farm to School or National Farm to School Month please contact Johanna Herron at Johanna.herron@alaska.gov or 907-761-3870.

Student harvesting potatoes at a nearby farm in Delta.

Land Sales & Grazing Leases

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

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ARLF Services

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Inspection Staff

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Mia Kirk 907-761-3853
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Mt. McKinley Meat & Sausage

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

Frank Huffman 907-745-5232
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Fairbanks Office

907-374-3716
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Pest Detection / Inspection Section

Have you made the necessary repairs to your elk fence in time for winter?

In accordance with AS 03.05.075, "Elk may be raised and bred as domestic stock for commercial purposes, including the sale of meat, by a person who lawfully owns the elk and who holds a current valid elk farming license…"

An applicant and/or current licensee must possess facilities for maintaining elk under positive control. For positive control a physical barrier must be provided to prevent elk from escaping and to exclude wild ungulates. Perimeter fencing on an elk farm must be constructed and maintained using adequate materials and workmanship strong enough to withstand animal impacts and tall enough to preclude escape by jumping.

In order to obtain an elk farming license, an application must be submitted to the Department of Natural Resources, Division of Agriculture with a biennial license fee. The perimeter fence must be inspected and approved by a representative of the Division of Agriculture. For more information on the elk fencing specifications and application please go to the Division of Agriculture website at http://dnr.alaska.gov/ag/ag_is.htm.

Plant Materials Center

http://plants.alaska.gov/
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ALASKA PLANT MATERIALS CENTER
STATE OF ALASKA · DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES · DIVISION OF AGRICULTURE

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Plant Materials Center (PMC)

Native Plant Source Directory information request

The Plant Materials Center (PMC) publishes the "Directory of Alaska Native Plant Sources" in response to numerous requests from the public, industry, and agencies for sources of native plant materials from Alaska. This Directory depends on the response of suppliers, and does not claim to include all producers or sellers of native Alaskan plants. This is an online publication and is free of charge. By completing this form I understand my listing will also be included in the printed 2016-2017 Alaska Grown Source Book.

Examples of listings may include grass seed, wildflower seed and plants, Alaska trees and shrubs, and revegetation resources.

To be included in the new directory YOU MUST REREGISTER to ensure we have your most current information.

To view the current directory visit:
http://plants.alaska.gov/nativeplantindex.htm

If you are a grower and would like to enlist, update, or verify your information please email Kim.Allen@alaska.gov or contact the Plant Materials Center, at 907-745-8735 by March 15, 2016 with the following information:

Name of Business: _____

Contact Name:_____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Web address: _____

Products offered: _____

_____

or you may submit the fillable online form at:
www.plants.alaska.gov/pdf/NativePlantSourceDirectoryRequest_2015.pdf

Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation:

Division of Environmental Health

Beef cattle management: castration and cow selection

Husbandry is the key to any livestock operation; a few important considerations related to castration of bull calves and the selections of cows for the herd are discussed in this article.

Castration:

There are a number of castration techniques that can be used for calves, no matter what you choose the best and most humane option is to castrate calves as young as possible. Ideally, the earliest time period would be at 24 hours old after the calf has consumed a good dose of colostrum. Studies show that pain perception and stress levels of the calves are lowest at this time.

Catching calves at birth can be challenging so the next option is to castrate before three months of age. Several studies find that calves show no big differences in performance, health and carcass traits compared to calves castrated soon after birth. But if you wait longer, such as at weaning, there is increased stress and risk for sickness and death loss. As part of the castration process you may want to consider including tetanus as part of a combination clostridial vaccine.

A study comparing methods of castration and timing showed that calves surgically castrated on at birth had the greatest average dairy gain, with those surgically castrated on 2 weeks later and both these groups out performed band or clamp (burdizzo) castrated calves at any age. Some may counter the recommendation for early castration with the effect of the small increase in testosterone production and weight gain up until about seven months of age, but the negatives of castrating late (stress, perception of pain, increased risk of disease, reduced gain at slaughter) outweigh this minor and short term growth benefit.

Castration of bull calves soon after birth is ideal in terms of: lower stress, improved animal welfare, improved health and weight gain in the feedlot. Many studies show enhanced marbling and tenderness of early castrated calves compared to castration at or after weaning. Castration at less than three months of age is a reasonable alternative to castration soon after birth. So if you are purchasing stock consider that purchasing bulls over steers or horned calves over polled calves due to lower initial costs, in the end you would have a negative effect on overall average daily gain and meat production.

Cow selection:

Other important factors determining the profitability of a beef herd are the proportion of the cows getting pregnant early in the breeding season and total percentage that are pregnant at the end of breeding season. Many factors, including temperament, contribute to these reproductive parameters. In a study of 8 beef herds, researchers observed cattle after routine handling thru a chute and used a numeric system to grade the cow's temperament. Cows with an excitable temperament took 24 more days to become pregnant compared to calm cows (median days to pregnancy, 35 vs. 59 days). In summary, beef cows with an excitable temperament had significantly lower reproductive performance (later calving time and lower conception rate) than calmer cows. Be selective when you purchase new stock and evaluate your herd cows, consider culling some of these excitable animals.

Environmental Health

Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation
Dec.Alaska.gov/eh/
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Starting and Operating a Specialty Food Business in Alaska

October 5, 7, 12, 14 and 19 from 5:30-8 p.m.

Sea Grant Alaska

COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE

Cost: $50 for all five sessions • Online only!

Course description:

Learn how to develop and manage a successful specialty food business from inception to operation. Topics include business planning, marketing, financing, permitting, promoting, regulations and more! For a full course description, visit our website: www.uaf.edu/c,es/small-food-business/courses.

What are "specialty foods"?

Specialty foods are manufactured in limited quantity with high-quality ingredients. They generally command a high price and include products such as handmade chocolates and food truck items.

This course is intended for:

- Individuals interested in starting and operating a specialty food business selling foods directly to consumers under the DEC Cottage Foods Exemption or temporary DEC permit
- DEC-permitted food production businesses that sell wholesale in Alaska
- DEC-permitted Mobile Food Units (food trucks)

Live, Internet-based course via Zoom.
Available statewide from any computer with a reliable connection.

*Must have video camera and microphone to actively participate.

Register early! Class size limited to 25 participants.

Participants must attend all five sessions. Each class day covers different information.

Course Instructors

Quentin Fong,
Seafood Marketing Specialist

Kate Idzorek,
Small Food Business Training and Development Coordinator

UAF UNIVERSITY OF ALASKA FAIRBANKS

Register online at: bit.ly/ces-workshops

Provide email address to receive link for course, or call Kate Idzorek at 474-5391.

UAF is an AA/EO employer and educational institution.