



The Division of Agriculture Activities

October 02, 2013

Find us on the web at:
<http://dnr.alaska.gov/ag>

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Questions or Comments?
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Director's Note

It is hard to believe that the months of summer have already flown by and winter is just around the corner. The leaves are rapidly changing and there is a feeling of urgency as the race against the weather begins. Once the fall harvest, chores, and winter preparations are done a sense of relief takes over and hopefully the winter months will bring some much needed rest for everyone.

I would like to thank Stu Davies for his service on the Board of Agriculture and Conservation. Stu served on the board from April of 2009 to September of this year. His resignation from the board leaves a vacancy – Stu had held the grass/grain seat. If you are interested in serving on the Board of Agriculture and Conservation and/or would like some additional information it can be found at <http://gov.alaska.gov/parnell/services/boards-commissions.html>.

Not only has fall brought the changing leaves, but October also brings a change – the implementation of the Affordable Care Act. There has been confusion surrounding the implementation of this Act and how it will affect individuals as well as employers. The State of Alaska has provided the following link to answer questions and provide additional information at <http://www.commerce.alaska.gov/ins/Insurance/ACA/>.

As always, there is a lot of information included in the newsletter. Please take the time to review current projects, grant opportunities, various updates and upcoming conferences. If you have any questions or concerns please, give me a call or send me an [e-mail](#).

~ *Franci Havemeister*

*"Opportunity is missed by most people because it is dressed in overalls and looks like work."
– Thomas Edison*

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Agriculture Calendar

► **Thur. Oct. 10th**

Board of Agriculture & Conservation Meeting

1 p.m., Division of Agriculture,

1800 Glenn Highway, Suite 12, Palmer, AK 99645

Details: [here](#);

If you have an event that you would like to add to the calendar, please contact [Lora Haralson](#).

Marketing Section

Marketing Team Works to Raise Awareness of Alaska Grown

The marketing team worked hard throughout this growing season to raise the awareness of the availability of Alaska Grown products through a variety of efforts. We'd love to hear your feedback on any/all of these efforts. What advertisements did you see? What advertisements did your customers mention? What would you like to see done differently through the winter or leading up to next year?

- The team makes (almost) daily posts to our Alaska Grown Facebook page. We now have 13,994 followers to our page and our average weekly reach is over 10,000 people. Are you following our Facebook page? Is your farm business on Facebook? Be sure to 'connect' with us! We love to re-post photos and announcements from our Alaska Grown members. Find us at www.facebook.com/dnr.alaskagrown.

- Have you seen either of the Alaska Grown commercials on TV? Since July, we have had two commercials, one featuring First Lady Sandy Parnell and the other featuring Hobo Jim, airing throughout Alaska. Both commercials encourage Alaskans to look for Alaska Grown products wherever they shop; they will continue to air through the end of the year. If you haven't seen them on TV, you can view the commercials on our Alaska Grown YouTube page at <http://www.youtube.com/user/AlaskaGrownProgram>

- The Restaurant Rewards program began its second year on June 1st. Have you noticed the restaurants that you visit promoting the use of Alaska Grown? We encourage you to ask your server if they source any Alaska Grown products. Vote with your food dollars and support the restaurants that support the local agriculture industry. Find a printable flyer to deliver to your favorite restaurant at <http://dnr.alaska.gov/ag/RR/RRFLY.pdf>.

- We continue to work closely with retail grocery stores to highlight and promote the Alaska Grown items they have for sale. Did you notice the new signage in stores this year?

- Division staff members visited the Kenny Lake, Kenai Peninsula, and Palmer State Fairs this summer. Promotional supplies such as bumper stickers, buttons, and Source Books were distributed. We believe it is important to remind all Alaskans about the value of selecting Alaska Grown products.

- The Chef at the Market program sponsored 27 demonstrations at seven different farmers markets and special events this summer. Initial reports indicate new relationships established between farmers and Chefs as a result – we are excited about this development.

Please contact [Amy Pettit](#) with your feedback about any/all of the above.



Have you seen the benches promoting Alaska Grown?

ARLF Services

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National 'Farm to School Month' is Here!

October is National Farm to School Month!
Alaska celebrates by hosting the 3rd Annual Alaska Farm to School Challenge.

Have you conducted an activity this year that:

1. Engages kids in an educational activity?
2. Has to do with agriculture?

If so, you are eligible for the challenge!

Go to http://dnr.alaska.gov/ag/ag_FTS.htm to fill out the application and find more information. Applications will be accepted through Thursday, October 31st.

All participants win prizes, and you could win one of our awesome grand prizes as well!



Contact Taylor Berberich with any questions or for more information.

taylor.berberich@alaska.gov

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Pest Detection / Inspection Section

Monitoring and Detection Surveys

This summer season, the Division of Agriculture conducted two monitoring and detection surveys on peony farms in the Matsu, Fairbanks, and Kenai/ Homer areas, through cooperative agreements with the USDA Animal Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS).

The first survey is a pest survey, specific to targeting thrips species associated with peony cut flowers in Alaska. This is the second year for this pest survey to be conducted. The goal of this survey is to gain knowledge of thrips and other insects that are associated with the peony cut flower which could have an impact on export markets. This baseline information will provide guidance on pest management in an effort to support export potential.



Magnified image of an adult thrip.

Flowers were collected and insects were reared utilizing Berlese funnels. Once the insects were collected they were sent to The University of Alaska, Fairbanks for identification and curation.



Berlese funnel - A method to rear insects from cut flowers.

The second survey is a continuation of efforts to monitor for soil nematodes that may vector the Tobacco Rattle Virus (TRV). This survey began in 2009, where a composite of soil is taken and then forwarded to an accredited Nematology lab for screening. Symptoms of TRV have been reported in Alaska (see image) but the soil nematodes, *Trichodorus* and *Paratrichodorus* that specifically vector TRV, have not.



Peony plants with TRV symptoms.

Although the soil nematodes that vector TRV have yet to be detected in Alaska, nematodes in the same genus have been reported. At the present time, the State of Alaska does not require peony roots to be treated prior to importation, therefore, it is important to continue to monitor for these nematodes.

In the future, if you would like your farm to participate in these monitoring/ detection surveys please contact Doug Warner at Douglas.Warner@alaska.gov or 907-761-3861.

Plant Materials Center

<http://plants.alaska.gov/>

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Plant Materials Center

Staff Conducts Harvest, Winterization, and Updates

The temperature is dropping and winter is on its way. Is your farm ready for the upcoming season? The Plant Materials Center (PMC) staff has been busy winterizing the facility. This included harvesting of potatoes, onions, garlic, and many seeds for testing and storage. Field and greenhouse irrigation systems have been drained and stored for preparation of the coming winter. The ethnobotany garden pond was also drained for the winter and for upcoming maintenance.

The PMC hosted its annual Fall Seed Sale that ended on October 1st. The center sold a total of 473 pounds of various seeds. The PMC hosts these seed sales every spring and autumn. Certified native grass, grain, and flower seed was available for bulk purchase to commercial growers. Non-commercial growers are encouraged to contact businesses listed on the website under the [Native Plant Source Directory](#).

The PMC seed lab is currently undergoing a facelift with the removal of an inoperable walk-in cooler. The removal of this cooler will allow the seed lab more space to conduct their seed testing.

Be on the lookout for changes to the PMC website as we prepare to go live with a brand new invasive plants section. We hope these edits to the website encourage communities to get involved in the battle against invasive plants!

For more information on PMC activities visit their website at plants.alaska.gov or call the center directly at 907-745-4469.



Lyubo Mahlev hard at work in the seed lab.



A worker at the PMC harvesting barley.



The Plant Materials Center's farm fields in the winter time.



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UNIVERSITY OF ALASKA FAIRBANKS

School of Natural Resources & Agricultural Sciences

Grazing Workshop Furthers UAF Mission to Connect With Farmers

Farmers learned the nuts and bolts of good grazing practices and low-stress animal handling at UAF's Robert G. White Large Animal Research Station in early September.

Ben Bartlett, retired dairy and livestock agent from Michigan State University Extension, was in town to lead the workshop, sponsored by the UAF School of Natural Resources and Agricultural Sciences and the UAF Animal Resources Center.

"We're working with farmers who have small livestock to help them maximize small spaces," said Assistant Professor Jan Rowell. "That's a good place to start. We want to get people interested and train the trainers, then set up small focal workshops."

Bartlett said he believes holistic planned grazing can help Alaskans use their resources more wisely and be more successful in livestock operations. "The important thing with grazing is how long the animal stays in one place to graze," he said. "The quicker the better; that gives the pasture time to rest and grow back."

Equipping farmers with this kind of knowledge can help increase food security in the state, Bartlett said. "A lot of people are interested in growing food and there is a lot of forage. Let the animals convert the forage to something valuable for people.

"It's making better use of the land resources." Just before heading out for his first try at herding reindeer (he normally works with cattle), Bartlett said he is a strong advocate of low-stress animal handling. "It's asking animals what you want them to do rather than forcing them. You learn to communicate with them."

Domestic animals want to do what their caretakers want them to do, Bartlett explained. "You've got to learn why animals act like animals."

Learning these methods can make life less stressful for animals and people. "The feet follow the head," Bartlett explained. "Get them looking where they want to go."

For example, people often try to push an animal into a chute, but Bartlett advises standing

at the animal's shoulder, then turn toward its back end and move away.

"I don't want to teach cow whispering, but I do want people to be cow listeners, to be able to communicate," he said.

Patience is one of the key attributes in animal handling. And special food treats can



Ben Bartlett works with reindeer at the Large Animal Research Station at UAF.

be a wonderful motivator for animals. Bartlett said the reindeer were very tame and that researchers could train the calves to go where they need to go, so they will be agreeable to it when they are adults. "It takes practice but you can teach the young ones to move back and forth without a reason."

When met with a statement about how much time that would take, Bartlett responded, "We have a saying that the quickest way to get it done is slowly.

"You build relationships and the animals can trust they are not going to have a bad experience."

Rowell said the hands-on workshop was one of the things requested at the two livestock conferences UAF hosted in 2011 and 2012.

This will now become a long-term research project on the feasibility of using improved grazing techniques and animal management as it affects potential income and land management. It is tied to a graduate student's research and in a few years it will be obvious at LARS whether the pasture management techniques were successful.