



# The Division of Agriculture Activities

November 4, 2013

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

## Director's Office

**Franci Havemeister, Director**  
907-761-3867  
[Franci.Havemeister@alaska.gov](mailto:Franci.Havemeister@alaska.gov)

**Curt Sandvik**  
907-761-3866  
[Curt.Sandvik@alaska.gov](mailto:Curt.Sandvik@alaska.gov)

**Lora Haralson**  
907-761-3851  
[Lora.Haralson@alaska.gov](mailto:Lora.Haralson@alaska.gov)

**Rebecca Jeffers**  
907-761-3850  
[Rebecca.Jeffers@alaska.gov](mailto:Rebecca.Jeffers@alaska.gov)

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## Director's Note

Well, it is not official yet.....but this October looks to be the warmest on record for South Central Alaska with the average monthly temperature at 43.1°F, potentially beating out the old record set in 1936 with a record of 42.1°F. This warm temperature trend was not only a treat for Alaska's hardy "trick or treaters" accustomed to braving the cold with multiple layers of protective gear but also to at least one local commercial producer who told me he is still harvesting broccoli – on November 1<sup>st</sup>! This year has been interesting, to say the least.

The Annual Farm Bureau meeting will be held on November 16<sup>th</sup>, with the Farm Forum meeting on November 15<sup>th</sup> held at Chena Hot Springs Resort. Hope to see you there!

Although the weather is deceiving, November is here and the deadline is looming for those interested in making comments on FDA's Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA); Produce Safety and Preventive Controls. FSMA continues to gain national interest as it is the first major overhaul of food safety practices since 1938, and while it is estimated the proposed rules and the implementation of FSMA will impact only 21% of farms, it will affect 90% of farmed acreage. Please take the time to become informed and submit your comments before the deadline. More information can be found at [USDA FDA FSMA](#). Public comments can be submitted at [Government Regulations](#) through November 15<sup>th</sup>.

With Christmas just around the corner, that means the legislative session is almost upon us. One topic that will garner discussion this session is [HB207](#). Representative Eric Feige introduced this bill, which combines the Natural Resource Conservation & Development Board with the Board of Agriculture and Conservation (BAC) and moves the Agricultural Revolving Loan Fund (ARLF) loan approval from the current BAC and into the Department of Commerce Community & Economic Development. Representative Feige and his Aide, Michael Paschall attended several meetings this past month expressing a desire to work with the agriculture community. He and I spoke recently and he stressed the fact that he is looking for input on what people like or don't like about the bill. I encourage you to take advantage of his willingness to work with industry and provide input as he has requested. Please provide your comments to Representative Eric Feige at [Eric.Feige@akleg.gov](mailto:Eric.Feige@akleg.gov) and/or e-mail [Michael.Paschall@akleg.gov](mailto:Michael.Paschall@akleg.gov).

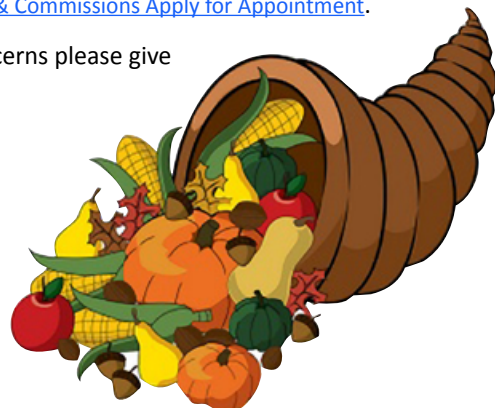
The Board of Agriculture and Conservation has one vacancy and one pending vacancy. If you are interested in serving on this board or have any questions please give me a call or submit your online application to [Boards & Commissions Apply for Appointment](#).

As always, if you have any questions or concerns please give me a call at 761-3867 or send me an e-mail [Franci.Havemeister@alaska.gov](mailto:Franci.Havemeister@alaska.gov).

Happy Thanksgiving!

~ *Franci Havemeister*

*"When one chooses the high road,  
there is seldom a traffic jam."  
– Author unknown*



## Marketing Staff

[http://dnr.alaska.gov/ag/ag\\_ms.htm](http://dnr.alaska.gov/ag/ag_ms.htm)

**Amy Pettit, Marketing Manager**

907-761-3864

[Amy.Pettit@alaska.gov](mailto:Amy.Pettit@alaska.gov)

**Kyla Byers** 907-761-3880

[VISTA Volunteer]

[Kyla.Byers@alaska.gov](mailto:Kyla.Byers@alaska.gov)

**Jacki Schade** 907-761-3858

[Jacquelyn.Schade@alaska.gov](mailto:Jacquelyn.Schade@alaska.gov)

**Taylor Berberich** 907-761-3855

[Taylor.Berberich@alaska.gov](mailto:Taylor.Berberich@alaska.gov)



## Fairbanks Office

907-328-1950

**Curtis Knight** 907-374-3732

[Curtis.Knight@alaska.gov](mailto:Curtis.Knight@alaska.gov)



## Agriculture Calendar

- ▶ **Tue. Nov. 5<sup>th</sup> - 7<sup>th</sup>** **Annual Invasive Species Conference.** Fairbanks.  
*Details: [here](#).*
- ▶ **Wed. Nov. 6<sup>th</sup>** **Harvest Dinner. 6:00 p.m.** 1132 S. Chugach St., Palmer  
*Details: [here](#).*
- ▶ **Fri. Nov. 15<sup>th</sup> - 16<sup>th</sup>** **AK Farm Bureau Annual Meeting.** Chena Hot Springs. Fairbanks.  
*Details: [here](#).*

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

## Marketing Section

### Dry Summer Results in Reduced Hay Crops

A longer, colder spring combined with a hot dry summer has resulted in hay farmers seeing crops about 1/3 to 1/2 of normal production. In August the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture authorized emergency haying on Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) lands near Delta Junction in an effort to increase the in-state supply of hay. A hay shortage is still anticipated.

The Division of Agriculture has been in contact with the Department of Transportation, Division of Commercial Vehicle Enforcement regarding oversize and overweight permits for producers transporting hay into Alaska from the Canadian border. Producers interested in obtaining a DOT hay permit can find additional information on the Division of Agriculture web page under: [What's New](#).

### New Winter Farmers Market Options

It wasn't long ago that the list of Alaska farmers markets was less than 20. Now, that number has not only (more than) doubled, but there are also multiple year-round farmers market options! This is evidence of two things. #1, Alaska producers are using innovative techniques to extend their season and store their products and #2, there is a growing demand from Alaska consumers to access more locally grown food year round.

- [The Center Market](#)
- [The South Anchorage Winter Market](#)
- [The Bethel Farmers Market](#)
- [The Mat Su Winter Market](#)

If you are aware of other winter farmers market options – please contact [Amy Pettit](#) to get your information on the list.

## Thank you to everyone who participated in the Alaska Farm to School Challenge!

During the month of October, school programs across Alaska participated in the Alaska Farm to School Challenge- a fun initiative to promote local foods in schools and agricultural education. Preliminary counts show involvement from 27 schools, 163 classrooms, reaching nearly 3,000 students!

For all our Challenge participants, stay tuned in the coming weeks to hear the competition results and to claim your prizes!

On behalf of the Alaska Farm to School program, I would like to send a sincere thank you to all those who got their hands dirty and shared their knowledge with Alaskan students. Your efforts to open young minds and promote Alaska's agriculture economy are invaluable to the future of our state!



Contact Taylor Berberich with any questions or for more information.  
[Taylor.Berberich@alaska.gov](mailto:Taylor.Berberich@alaska.gov) (907) 761-3855

## ARLF Services

[http://dnr.alaska.gov/ag/ag\\_arlf.htm](http://dnr.alaska.gov/ag/ag_arlf.htm)

Amanda Swanson, Loan Officer

907-761-3869

[Amanda.Swanson@alaska.gov](mailto:Amanda.Swanson@alaska.gov)



## Land Sales & Grazing Leases

[http://dnr.alaska.gov/ag/ag\\_sales.htm](http://dnr.alaska.gov/ag/ag_sales.htm)

Dan Proulx 907-374-3716

[Dan.Proulx@alaska.gov](mailto:Dan.Proulx@alaska.gov)

Erik Johnson 907-761-3863

[Erik.Johnson@alaska.gov](mailto:Erik.Johnson@alaska.gov)

# Agricultural Revolving Loan Fund Section

## Loan Applications 101:

### 14 Tips for Completing and Submitting Successful ARLF Loan Applications

#### **1. Who is signing?**

All application documents must be completed and signed in blue or black ink. Documents requiring signature must be signed by all applicants. If applying as a new business, the Board of Agriculture & Conservation (BAC) may require anyone with a 10% interest or more to apply as a personal guarantee.

#### **2. Application Fee**

The \$50.00 application fee must be paid at the time an application is submitted. The loan officer cannot begin processing your application until the fee has been paid.

#### **3. Know What You are Applying For**

Your application must include what loan type(s) you need, the amount requested, and the preferred loan term. If you are unsure of what type of loan your request would qualify as, you may contact the loan officer prior to applying and they can help you determine which loan type would best meet your needs. Some applicants may even require a package of loans. This may be included all under one application. If you are purchasing new property, a purchase agreement will also be necessary.

#### **4. What is the Purpose of the Loan?**

The purpose of the loan and use of the loan proceeds must be clearly stated on the loan application.

#### **5. Tax Returns**

Current three year full tax returns are required. If you have previously received a loan from ARLF and are applying for a new loan, you can contact your loan officer to see what tax returns they already have on file.

#### **6. Financial Statements**

##### **Must Be Accurate**

Completed and signed financial statements must be submitted by all applicants. It is here that you will list all of your or your business's assets and liabilities. Items can include personal vehicles, recreational vehicles, contracts, and investments. You will also list what agricultural products are currently available for sale or are already in production. Be sure to research the value of your assets and liabilities, and to cross check that these values also correlate with the values you will include on your annual Income and Expense Statements. The Financial Statement is one of the forms most often "kicked back" by the loan officer for inflated values, insufficient values, or other inaccuracies which require modification before a loan application can proceed.

#### **7. Know Your Collateral**

Collateral is a requirement for all ARLF loans. ARLF can lend up to 75% of the value of the collateral provided. Multiple items can be used as collateral to secure a loan to meet the 75% requirement, such as multiple pieces of property or equipment. A detailed description of the collateral provided must be listed on the ARLF form. If using equipment as collateral, the year, make, model, serial number, and condition of the equipment must be provided as well as the location, purchase date, and original cost of the equipment.

#### **8. Farm Income and Expense Statements**

Annual Income and Expense Statements of the farm operation are required for the prior year, current

year, and projected year. If your farm operation is new, additional projected years may be requested, especially if the farm is not yet in operation.

### **9. What is Your Plan?**

The Five Year Business plan is the application document most often submitted incomplete or not submitted at all. However it is probably the most important document for your loan approval and your farm's success. Creating a business plan and then frequently reviewing it will help keep your farm operation on track. Your business plan must include what product you plan on farming, your scale of production, how many crops per acre, what unit you will sell your product as, how you will market your product, and what your market is. The ARLF webpage provides a document for the five year business plan however if you think that it does not allow enough space to be able to provide a comprehensive business plan, then the loan officer can accept a separate document upon review and approval.

### **10. What Experience Do You have?**

A summary of the applicant's agricultural experience is also required. ARLF does not require a specific amount of years experience but some agricultural experience and/ or business experience is preferred. A summary can be provided either on the loan application, as a separate letter to the BAC, or even resumes have been accepted in the past.

### **11. Check Your Credit Report Before Applying**

A credit report is pulled and reviewed by the ARLF loan officer. If there are any outstanding collections, judgements, or tax liens, those will have to be paid prior to a loan application proceeding. A credit explanation for bankruptcy and other derogatory credit will be required. To

check your credit, you can go to [www.annualcreditreport.com](http://www.annualcreditreport.com).

### **12. Pictures, Pictures, Pictures!**

If you live in a rural area, or outside of the Mat-Su Valley, the loan officer may request pictures of the collateral provided in order to verify the collateral's condition and determine its value. Pictures of the farm's operation may also be requested. Pictures are also useful to provide to the BAC so that they can better understand your farming operation and loan request. Pictures can be emailed to the loan officer or included in the application packet.

### **13. Review and Double Check!**

The ARLF webpage includes an ARLF Application Checklist with all the documents required for the application packet. Make sure all documents have been included, are signed, and are completed. Incomplete loan packets can slow down the application process and may not be able to be submitted to the BAC in time for the meeting. Be sure to leave a preferred method of contact on the loan application.

### **14. It's OK to Ask**

The ARLF loan officer cannot complete the application documents for you but they are here to help you through the application process and to answer any questions that you have or come across along the way. Also, if a conflict of interest exists, an applicant can request that a BAC member not be included in the loan review.

The ARLF webpage can be found at [http://dnr.alaska.gov/ag/ag\\_arlf.htm](http://dnr.alaska.gov/ag/ag_arlf.htm). Call (907) 761-3869 or email [amanda.swanson@alaska.gov](mailto:amanda.swanson@alaska.gov) to speak with the ARLF loan officer regarding any loan questions or to schedule an appointment.



## Inspection Staff

[http://dnr.alaska.gov/ag/ag\\_is.htm](http://dnr.alaska.gov/ag/ag_is.htm)

**Doug Warner, Inspection Manager**

907-761-3869

[Douglas.Warner@alaska.gov](mailto:Douglas.Warner@alaska.gov)

**Mia Kirk** 907-761-3853

[Mia.Kirk@alaska.gov](mailto:Mia.Kirk@alaska.gov)

**Barb Hanson** 907-761-3854

[Barbara.Hanson@alaska.gov](mailto:Barbara.Hanson@alaska.gov)

**Kirk Brown** 907-761-3857

[Kirk.Brown@alaska.gov](mailto:Kirk.Brown@alaska.gov)



## Mt. McKinley Meat & Sausage

[http://dnr.alaska.gov/ag/ag\\_mmms.htm](http://dnr.alaska.gov/ag/ag_mmms.htm)

**Frank Huffman** 907-745-5232

[Frank.Huffman@alaska.gov](mailto:Frank.Huffman@alaska.gov)

## Pest Detection / Inspection Section

### FDA Issues Proposed Rule on CGMPs and Preventive Controls for Food for Animals Under the Food Safety Modernization Act



The FDA has issued and is taking comments on the proposed rule on Current Good Manufacturing Practices (CGMPs) and preventive controls for food for animals. The proposed rule establishes science-based standards for domestic and imported animal food, including pet food, animal feed, and the raw materials and ingredients used to make them. The proposed rule is part of the FDA Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA), which was signed into law in 2011. The proposed rule will be open for public comment

for 120 days before it is finalized at the end of January. The animal food rule is the fifth and final part of the new FSMA regulations to be drafted by FDA.

The proposed requirements will ensure the safety of animals that consume the food as well as the safety of humans who handle it, particularly pet food. Along with the already-proposed Foreign Supplier Verification Program, it will require importers to take steps to ensure that imported human and animal food both are as safe as those that are produced domestically.

#### Who Would be Covered?

The proposed rule would apply to facilities that manufacture, process, pack, or hold either feed for livestock or pet food, and will apply to both foreign and domestic manufacturers.

The proposed rule would provide exemptions for some parts of the regulations for "small" and "very small" businesses, in accordance with income guidelines that have not been finalized as of yet. The text of the proposed rule, as well as FDA's proposed definitions of "small" and "very small" businesses can be viewed at the FDA web link below.

#### What Would the Proposed Standards Cover?

The rule focuses on preventing problems by requiring new Current Good Manufacturing Processes (CGMPs) for animal food, which address such issues as:

- Hygiene
- Facility operations, maintenance, and sanitation
- Equipment and utensil design, use, and maintenance
- Processes and controls
- Warehousing and distribution

The rule will require each owner, operator, or agent in charge of a qualifying facility to register with the FDA and to prepare and implement a written food safety plan, which would include the following:

- A hazard analysis that identifies and evaluates known and foreseeable hazards for each type of product manufactured, processed, packed or held at the facility
- Preventive controls to minimize or prevent hazards likely to occur with regard to cross-contamination, sanitation, etc.
- Monitoring procedures
- Corrective actions that would be used when preventive controls fail
- Verification through monitoring, instrument calibration, etc.
- Recordkeeping

#### When Would the New Requirements be Effective?

If you are covered by the rule, you will have anywhere from one to three years after the effective date to come into compliance with the requirements, depending on the size of your business. The effective date is 60 days after the FINAL rule is published in the Federal Register.

You can find more information on FDA's Food Safety Modernization Act and how it will affect you on the web at: <http://www.fda.gov/Food/GuidanceRegulation/FSMA/default.htm>

## Plant Materials Center

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

Main Phone: 907-745-4469

**Stoney Wright, Manager**

907-745-8105

[Stoney.Wright@alaska.gov](mailto:Stoney.Wright@alaska.gov)

**Rob Carter** 907-745-8127

[Rob.Carter@alaska.gov](mailto:Rob.Carter@alaska.gov)

**Bill Campbell** 907-745-8724

[William.Campbell@alaska.gov](mailto:William.Campbell@alaska.gov)

**Peggy Hunt** 907-745-8721

[Peggy.Hunt@alaska.gov](mailto:Peggy.Hunt@alaska.gov)

**Brianne Blackburn** 907-745-8785

[Brianne.Blackburn@alaska.gov](mailto:Brianne.Blackburn@alaska.gov)

**Alicia Holladay** 907-745-8104

[Alicia.Holladay@alaska.gov](mailto:Alicia.Holladay@alaska.gov)

**Lyubo Mahlev** 907-745-8782

[Lyubomir.Mahlev@alaska.gov](mailto:Lyubomir.Mahlev@alaska.gov)



**Phil Czapla** 907-745-8747

[Phil.Czapla@alaska.gov](mailto:Phil.Czapla@alaska.gov)

**Rusty Foreaker** 907-745-8092

[Rusty.Foreaker@alaska.gov](mailto:Rusty.Foreaker@alaska.gov)

**Casey Dinkel** 907-745-8108

[Casey.Dinkel@alaska.gov](mailto:Casey.Dinkel@alaska.gov)

**Todd Steinlage** 907-745-8138

[Todd.Steinlage@alaska.gov](mailto:Todd.Steinlage@alaska.gov)

**Kimberly Allen** 907-745-8735

[Kim.Allen@alaska.gov](mailto:Kim.Allen@alaska.gov)

**Michael Keen** 907-745-4469

[Michael.Keen@alaska.gov](mailto:Michael.Keen@alaska.gov)

**Heather Stewart** 907-745-4469

[Heather.Stewart@alaska.gov](mailto:Heather.Stewart@alaska.gov)

## Plant Materials Center

### How to Properly Store Your Potatoes

The growing season is over, the spuds have been dug and now await consumption. Proper storage can lengthen the time that the tubers remain in an edible form. The potato is a living, breathing organism. The tubers require oxygen and give off carbon dioxide. The potato's skin acts as a protective barrier. It helps keep microorganisms from invading and it also helps keep the water in. Damage to the skin creates an opening to the edible parts and allows moisture to escape. A potato is 80% water when harvested. Loss of water leads to wrinkled appearance. The potato flesh is full of nutrients that many rot organisms can colonize.

After harvest, sort potatoes to identify damage. Damaged tubers should be used first as they will not keep as well and can cause damage to spread within the storage container. Heal wounds and set skins by keeping the storage temperature between 50°F and 55°F for two weeks. High humidity in the storage atmosphere will help the tubers retain moisture. Keep potatoes away from light to prevent greening.

After the healing process drop the storage temperature. Potatoes for long term storage should be kept at 39°F. Temperatures above 39°F will shorten the dormancy period. If potatoes are to be fried, they should be kept at a temperature above 45°F to prevent the accumulation of sugars that will darken the fries. Keep the temperature below 60°F as warm temperatures encourage the growth of rot causing organisms and encourage the development of sprouts. Sprouts can be removed and the tubers will still be edible.

The amount of time that potatoes will stay dormant is genetically dependent. Some varieties will stay dormant longer than others. In general potatoes will store for 30 to 140 days before sprouting. Store bought potatoes typically are treated to delay sprouting.

### Storing Potatoes

#### **1. Where is the best place to store potatoes?**

Store potatoes in a cool, dark, and well ventilated place. They will keep about a week at room temperature and for several weeks at 45°F to 50°F.

However, refrigerator temperatures are too low, which converts the potato's starch into sugar, resulting in a sweet taste. The extra sugar also causes potatoes to darken prematurely while frying. (This process can sometimes be reversed by storing the potatoes at room temperature for a week to 10 days.) If potatoes have green patches, cut them off, as they have been exposed too long to direct lighting and will have a faintly bitter taste. The rest of the potato will taste fine.

Potatoes are still alive when they are picked, so they should be kept in a cool area, away from the light. A cellar is ideal, but any place where they won't be exposed to excessive heat or light will help prevent spoiling.

#### **2. Should I wash my potatoes before storing?**

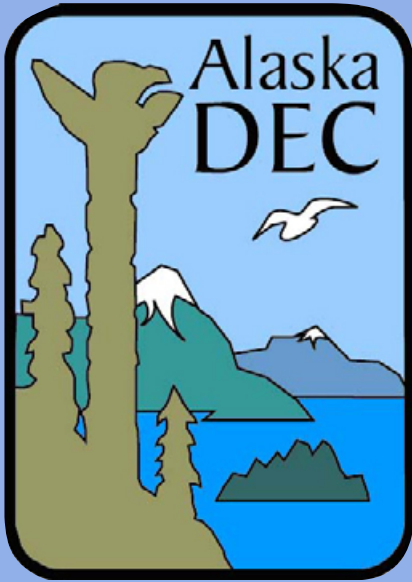
Before storing spuds, look them over and use any bruised ones first. Since dampness can cause decay, it is best not to wash spuds before storing.

#### **3. Can home made mashed potatoes be frozen?**

Once mashed they can be frozen but will typically oxidize or turn gray in a matter of days. To help prevent this, add a small amount (tablespoon) of white vinegar or concentrated lemon juice to the mixture once cooked.

#### **4. If I purchased a 50 pound box of potatoes how long would they stay good if stored in proper conditions?**

If stored at 45°F to 48°F with 95% humidity the potatoes will last quite some time, potentially months. Most people can not make arrangements to store them under those conditions. Store in the dark, in a cool location and you should be able to have them stay fresh for a couple of weeks. The potato is about 80% water, so high humidity really helps retain the moisture. Above 55 degrees the potato will start to shrink and is more susceptible to sprouting.



## Environmental Health

Alaska Department of  
Environmental Conservation

[Dec.Alaska.gov/eh/](http://Dec.Alaska.gov/eh/)  
907-269-7501

**Robert Gerlach**  
Alaska State Veterinarian  
907-375-8214  
[Bob.Gerlach@alaska.gov](mailto:Bob.Gerlach@alaska.gov)

**Jay Fuller**  
Assistant State Veterinarian  
907-375-8213  
[Jay.Fuller@alaska.gov](mailto:Jay.Fuller@alaska.gov)

# Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation: Division of Environmental Health

## Check What You are Feeding to Your Pets

The United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA) published an updated notice to veterinarians and consumers on October 22<sup>nd</sup> regarding illnesses linked to jerky pet treats originating from China. The total number of reported cases is 3,600 dogs and 10 cats since 2007 in the U.S. and six Canadian provinces. About 580 of those pets have died.

The FDA's Center for Veterinary Medicine has run more than 1,200 tests, visited pet treat manufacturing plants in China and worked with researchers, state labs and foreign governments but still hasn't determined the exact cause of the illness. The FDA noted that "in the past 10 years, there has been a dramatic increase in importation of pet food from China. Human consumption of poultry in China largely consists of dark meat, leaving a large amount of light meat poultry products available for export. From 2003, when China first approached the USDA about poultry exports, to 2011, the volume of pet food exports to the United States from China has grown 85-fold." Data shows that about 40 million kilograms of pet food were imported from China in 2011 alone.

Affected animals can exhibit lethargy, decreased appetite, vomiting and diarrhea, among other symptoms, within hours of eating treats sold as jerky tenders or strips made

of chicken, duck, sweet potatoes or dried fruit. Severe cases have involved kidney failure, gastrointestinal bleeding, and a rare kidney disorder (Fanconi syndrome). There have been numerous warnings that have been issued over the last few years and as a result some jerky pet treat products were removed from the market. The number of reports of sick pets may have declined because there are fewer jerky treats on the commercial market.

Portions of the proposed FDA Rules (FSMA) are directed toward improving the oversight of pet food production in an attempt to improve the safety of domestic and foreign-produced products. The proposed rules call for pet food manufacturers to provide written plans for identifying, preventing and addressing any potential hazards and would give the government power to directly intervene during production.

[Report a Complaint about Jerky Pet Treats here:](#)





SCHOOL OF NATURAL RESOURCES  
& AGRICULTURAL SCIENCES

**Martha Westphal**  
907-474-7188  
[mmwestphal@alaska.edu](mailto:mmwestphal@alaska.edu)

**Marilyn Childress**  
907-474-7083  
[mlchildress@alaska.edu](mailto:mlchildress@alaska.edu)

**Nancy Tarnai**  
907-474-5042  
[ntarnai@alaska.edu](mailto:ntarnai@alaska.edu)

[snras.blogspot.com](http://snras.blogspot.com)  
[www.uaf.edu/snras](http://www.uaf.edu/snras)  
[facebook.com/uaf.snras](https://facebook.com/uaf.snras)

## UNIVERSITY OF ALASKA FAIRBANKS

### School of Natural Resources & Agricultural Sciences

#### Researchers Find Potential for Biofuel Crops and Cheaper Energy in Alaska

*Story contributed by Sara Delheimer, Multistate Research Fund, Colorado State University*

Despite large scale oil production in the state, energy costs in Alaska are extremely high, especially in remote areas, and many communities are eager to find cheaper ways to heat their homes and keep their lights on. Studies underway at the University of Alaska Fairbanks are exploring the potential for crops that can be grown sustainably by Alaska farmers and used by regional biorefineries to produce fuels and power. These studies are part of a multistate research project (WERA-1016) that is assessing bioenergy options across the western U.S. and providing leadership in the national push for affordable, domestic energy.

Field trials are ongoing at several locations across the state to identify plants that are most suitable as biofuel crops and to determine best management practices for specific species and environmental conditions. Researchers have planted both native and nonnative woody plants (like willow, alder, and poplar) and perennial grasses (including bromegrass, reed canary grass, wheatgrass, and wildrye) to determine yield potential. So far, researchers have noted that introduced grass species (bromegrass and reed canary grass) seem to have higher yield potential than native grass species. Researchers have also reported that high yields from grasses require fairly high levels of nitrogen; since nitrogen is expensive in Alaska, this could be a major deterrent to production of grasses as bioenergy crops. Overall, yields for both woody plants and grasses have been fairly low to date. Researchers say this could be because most of the species used in the study are slow to establish or because of environmental limitations like short growing seasons, low soil temperature, and poor soil moisture.

Though many of the same crops that are traditionally grown for forage for animals, erosion control, or winter bedding can be used for biofuel production, biofuel production requires crop material that has a certain fiber composition and quality. Thus, growing biofuel crops requires a different approach than traditional farming. UAF's biofuel crop management studies have focused on best planting and harvesting



practices as well as optimum fertilizer methods, timing and rates. Researchers have found that cool, wet fall conditions in Alaska are not conducive to harvesting and field drying, however, leaving the crops in the field until spring is not likely to produce good harvests. Researchers have also noted that double-cut harvest regime (cuts in mid-summer and fall) yields are about the same as yields from a single-cut fall harvest for woody species.

These studies are still fairly new, and several more data years are needed before researchers can draw useful conclusions, however, some biofuel crop species are showing high yield potential when grown under optimum conditions. Ultimately, this research will help Alaska farmers and communities decide whether to invest in growing crops for biofuel production. Local biofuel production could give homeowners cheaper local energy options and could give farmers a chance to grow and profit from a new crop.

Federal support for this project is provided through USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture by the Multistate Research Fund established in 1998 by the Agricultural Research, Extension, and Education Reform Act (an amendment to the Hatch Act of 1888) to encourage and enhance multistate, multidisciplinary research on critical agricultural issues. Additional funds are provided by contracts and grants to participating scientists at the UAF.

Participating UAF researchers are Stephen D. Sparrow, Amanda Byrd, Mingchu Zhang, and Robert Van Veldhuizen.