



December 5, 2013

Find us on the web at:
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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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The Division of Agriculture Activities

Director's Note

Once again, the holiday season is upon us. This is my favorite time of year – lots of good food, family, friends, and fellowship. The excitement of my grandkids is contagious; as they “help” my husband set up our Christmas train which starts their countdown to Christmas day!

November has been a busy month; the Annual Farmer's Union meeting was held in Palmer on November 2nd followed by the Annual Farm Bureau meeting two weeks later in Chena. If you are not a member of an agriculture organization, I encourage you to join one or both of these organizations to stay informed of agriculture issues, take advantage of benefits they offer, and increase the unified voice of agriculture.

I would like to congratulate Frank Borman on receiving the Ag Appreciation Award at the 2013 Annual Farm Bureau meeting this month. He was recognized for his support of locally grown products and his willingness to share his knowledge and expertise with those growing their own vegetables, potatoes, and berries. Congratulations Frank!

Several items of interest this month:

The White House recently released a new report highlighting agriculture as a cornerstone of America's economy creating jobs and boosting opportunity. Agricultural production and its related sectors contributed \$743 billion to U.S. Gross Domestic Product in 2011, accounting for almost 5 percent of economic output. One of every 12 jobs in the U.S. is somehow connected to agriculture!

On November 25th, 2013, Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack announced the availability of nearly \$10.5 million in USDA grants to help agricultural producers enter in to value added activities to assist them with their competitive edge. If you are interested in applying for grants to assist your operation please review the following for additional information: [Value Added Producer Grants](#).

Department of Environmental Conservation, Office of the State Veterinarian, is accepting comments on the [proposed revised milk and milk product regulations](#). Please submit comments to [Jay Fuller](#) no later than 4:30 p.m. on January 2nd, 2014.

The Food Safety Inspection Service is accepting comments on their Compliance Guide for a Systematic Approach to the Humane Handling of Livestock. Please submit comments at [Compliance Guide for a Systematic Approach to the Human Handling of Livestock](#). The docket number is FSIS-2013-003.

The Board of Agriculture has two, three years seats available. If you are interested in being a board member or would like to nominate someone please contact [Elizabeth Giardinia](#).

May you have a very Merry Christmas and a safe and prosperous New Year!

~ *Franci Havemeister*

Christmas waves a magic wand over this world, and behold, everything is softer and more beautiful. ~Norman Vincent Peale



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Agriculture Calendar

- ▶ **Wed. Dec. 11th** **Sand Lake Elodea Public Meeting.** Sand Lake Elementary School Library, Anchorage. 6 p.m.; *Details:* [here](#)
- ▶ **Thur. Dec. 19th** **Board of Agriculture & Conservation Meeting.** 1800 Glenn Highway, Suite 12, Palmer. 1 p.m.; *Details:* [here](#)

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

Marketing Section

Save the Dates

Have you started marking up your 2014 calendar yet? Many of the annual industry meetings are held in the first quarter of the year. Starting in January with the Alaska Peony Growers Association winter meeting – the full agenda is now available on their website at www.alaskapeonies.org. You'll want to register early – there is limited seating this year! As always, this will no doubt be an informative and inspiring two days.

The first announcement about the [Producer Growers Conference](#) just came out – it will be held Saturday, February 1st in Palmer; Watch [UAF's website](#) for more information.

The annual Sustainable Agriculture Research & Education (SARE) conference will once again be held in Fairbanks. This year the dates have been set as March 12th & 13th with pre-conference workshops on Tuesday the 11th. More details will be forthcoming soon; watch <http://www.uaf.edu/ces/districts/tanana/> for more information.

Staff will likely attend all of these meetings with updates and announcements about 2014 grants and workshops as well as to share new marketing ideas. Please don't hesitate to [contact us](#) if you know of other dates to add to the list.

Growing Peonies in Alaska

Growing peonies in Alaska could be a profitable opportunity for you!

Attend a course to learn how you can start and run an Alaska peony farm.

Thursday, January 30th, 2014
2-5 p.m. at the BP Energy Center
900 E. Benson Blvd., Anchorage, AK

Contact the Alaska Peony Growers Association to Register at:

www.alaskapeonies.org

For more information visit:

<http://www.alaskapeonies.org/user-files/RightRiskFlyer.pdf>

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Alaska Farm to School

2013 Alaska Farm to School Challenge Winners Announced

Throughout the month of October, students nationwide had the chance to participate in National Farm to School Month. Alaskan students had the chance to participate in the form of the Alaska Farm to School Challenge. In fact, the [Alaska Farm to School Program](#) recorded 11 projects spanning more than 26 schools and over 160 classrooms, with nearly 3,000 students involved in National Farm to School Month this year!

The projects for the 2013 challenge held a tremendous level of variety; indoor and outdoor school gardens, harvest yield experiments, field trips to local farms, culinary programs focusing on cooking local ingredients, composting, and community meals made from Alaska Grown foods.

Each project was successful and promoted the use of local foods in schools. Funded by a generous donation from the Obesity Prevention and Control Program (within the [Alaska Department of Health and Social Services](#)) every classroom within the eleven submitted projects will receive a set of fantastic prizes catered to their specific activities! Prizes consist of kitchen utensils and gear for the culinary projects, gift cards to local garden supply stores, garden tools, weather stations, indoor grow lights, local veggies, posters, and lots of different books.

Of the projects, three stood out above the others as our top prize winners. In third place, Paul Banks Elementary School Garden in Homer involved pre-Kindergarten through third grade students in the planting, harvest, and serving of their own vegetable and herbs. In second place, the 21st Century Community Learning Center in partnership with the Alaska Botanical Garden grew crops indoors and held field trips to the botanical garden, as well as an event at the school's Science Night to demonstrate how to cook foods harvested by students.

Our first place winner was Louise's Farm School of Palmer. Their event featured local chef Chris Pavadore who held a local foods cooking demo and presentation for the students. The event involved a large variety of community members- farmers, teachers, parents and siblings of the students. It was also covered by many media sources.

The other fantastic projects, listed in alphabetical order, are:

- Airport Heights Elementary School Garden
- Code GREEN (Chugiak High School)
- Cooking Locally with the Little Red Hen (College Gate Elementary)
- Food Day Fish to Schools Lunch (Sitka)
- Haines Borough Schools Farm to School Program
- It Makes Good Sense to Eat Locally (College Gate Elementary)
- Nutritional Alaskan Foods
- Peterson Elementary Garden Project

The [Alaska Farm to School Program](#) is proud of the statewide involvement this year, and we look forward to an even more successful event for 2014. Any questions, concerns or comments can be directed to Taylor Berberich at 907-761-3855 or via [email](#).

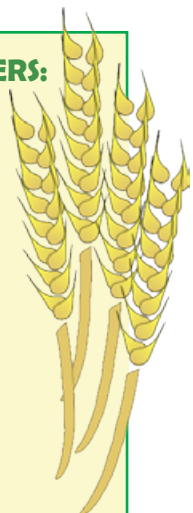
CALLING ALL SOUTH CENTRAL (Mat-Su Borough) PRODUCERS:

Here is your chance to tell the State Division of Agriculture and the Alaska Farmland Trust what they can do for you!

Fill out this short survey and let the agencies know what is missing. In addition to getting your voice heard, all participants will receive a unique Alaska Grown item and one lucky farm will be drawn to win an Alaska Grown T-Shirt or Apron. To fill out the survey, click on the following link:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/AKFarmSurvey>

The survey will close at 5:00 pm on December 20th, 2013. Feel free to share this survey with fellow Farmers and Ranchers in your area! If you have any questions about the survey, please [contact Jacquelyn Schade](#)



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Pest Detection / Inspection Section

REMINDER!

Buyers Be Aware of Interstate Movement of Christmas Trees & Wreaths

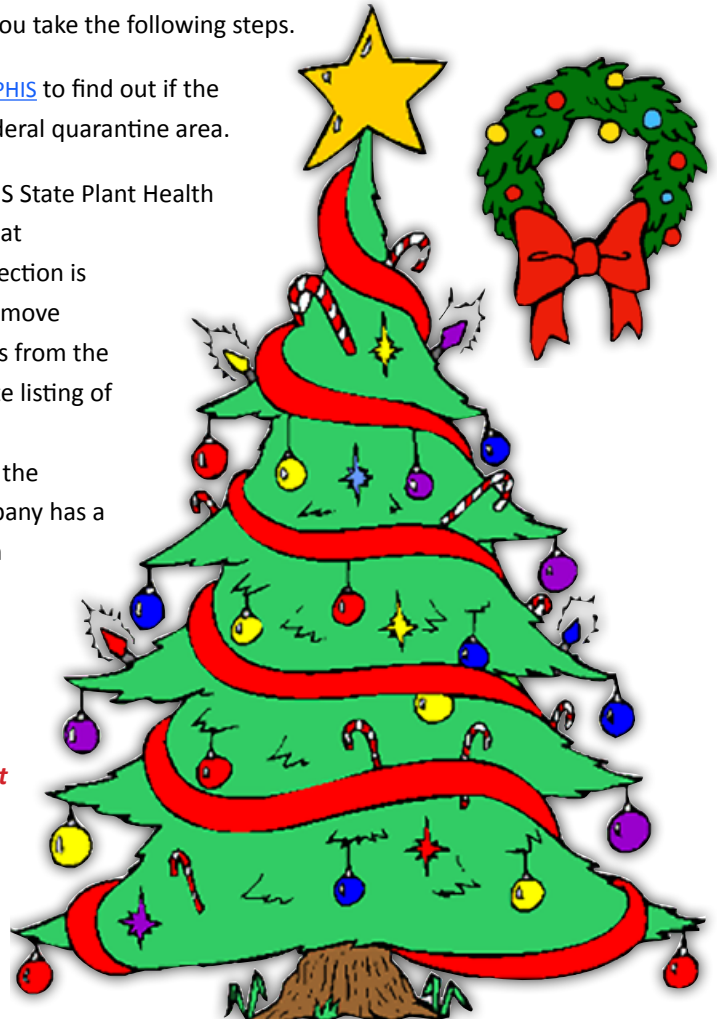
Because of the growing trend to market live Christmas trees and wreaths on the Internet, we would like to inform you of the USDA regulations regarding the interstate movement of Christmas trees and wreaths. This information will help ensure that your product can move without impediment, and help prevent the movement of pests that, if allowed to spread, could affect Alaska's beautiful landscape.

The movement of Christmas trees and wreaths, among other articles, is federally regulated in certain areas of the country. These regulations aim to prevent the movement of damaging forest pests such as gypsy moth, pine shoot beetle, as well as the sudden oak death pathogen, *Phytophthora ramorum*, which can spread by moving a number of decorative wood products. USDA, Animal & Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ) regulations, as well as some other State's regulations, require certain conditions be met in order to move Christmas trees and wreaths out of quarantined areas. APHIS and State regulatory personnel routinely work with Christmas tree farms and other holiday greenery establishments in quarantine areas to make sure companies are aware of and follow the applicable regulations. However, there may be farms or other entities that may not be in compliance with the regulations.

To ensure that the tree and wreath suppliers you use are in compliance, we suggest that you take the following steps.

1. Check the online maps at [APHIS](#) to find out if the supplying nursery is in a Federal quarantine area.
2. Contact the respective APHIS State Plant Health Director's office to learn what documentation and/or inspection is required for the supplier to move Christmas trees and wreaths from the quarantine area. A complete listing of USDA offices is at the [USDA APHIS website](#). Contact the supplier to ensure the company has a compliance agreement with APHIS and is meeting the requirements for moving Christmas trees and wreaths interstate.

We need your help to protect Alaska's environment and natural resources from the spread of these harmful pests. Your assistance is vital and much appreciated.



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Plant Materials Center

Winterized Weeds and Working Warriors

The weeds have senesced and the temperatures have plummeted, but the world of weed management at the PMC hasn't slowed down. The month of November has been filled with continual learning and opportunities for collaboration across the state with attendances at conferences, webinars, and looking to another year of successful management of invasive plants.

PMC staff recently travelled to Fairbanks to attend and present this season's management data at the [2013 Alaska Invasive Species Conference](#). The conference had three full days of presentations, posters, and working-group discussions about Alaska's invaders such as [Elodea](#), the green alder sawfly, the well-known northern pike, and white sweetclover. The PMC's Heather Stewart contributed her current work with [Canada thistle](#) in the poster presentations with maps of infestations and how they've changed since 2011. Heather received valuable feedback from collaborative agencies and looks forward to adding more to the project for next year's season. The PMC's Invasive Weeds and Agricultural Pest Coordinator, Brianne Blackburn, also presented the ongoing modifications to the Division of Agriculture's Plant Health and Quarantine Regulations. Since this is currently an ongoing process, questions and comments were a productive way for open discussion to make sure the new regulations will benefit both Alaskan environments and its residents.

PMC members also attended the [2013 Mat-Su Salmon Science & Conservation Symposium](#) in Palmer. The symposium emphasized the Mat-Su being "The Trillion Dollar Valley" due to its economic value of ecosystem services including fishing and hunting, abundance of clean drinking water, and recreational opportunities. Having a perspective as a weed warrior, the relevance of economics to weed science and management is quite obvious for preservation of agriculture and our natural environment; especially our water resources from aquatic invasive plants like [Elodea](#) in the Mat-Su and throughout Alaska.

So, as we continue to learn more from these invaluable opportunities, we look outside and admire the beauty of our white blanket of snow and ice and wonder: what will pop up next year?

For more information on invasive species please contact the Invasive Weeds and Agricultural Pest Coordinator, Brianne Blackburn, at 907-745-8785, via [email](#), or visit us on the web at <http://plants.alaska.gov/invasives/index.htm>.

For more information on Canada thistle click on the image below

NOT WANTED: Canada Thistle
Cirsium arvense
INVASIVE SPECIES
Please call and report sightings:
1-877-INVASIV

STANDING CANADA THISTLE IN ANCHORAGE, ALASKA
Tracking changes since 2011
Newer, Greater, U.S. and Invasive Weeds
Alaska Plant Materials Center

CONCLUSION

- Since 2011, site 1 has decreased in size by 3,508 m² and site 2 by 388 m²
- Site 3 has an overlapping area by 30% and site 2 by 54%
- Site 2's herb has an overlapping area of 87%
- Site 3 has increased in area since 2011 by 790 m² and site 4 by 358 m²
- Site 3 has the greatest overlapping area of 70% and site 4 with an area of 67%

Site	Area (m ²)	Overlap (%)
Site 1	3,508	0%
Site 2	388	54%
Site 3	790	70%
Site 4	358	67%

DISCUSSION

High overlapping percentages suggest a well established and mature infestation and should be target areas for control. Lower overlapping percentages suggest that infestation sites are lacking established stands and dense cover of Canada thistle. This, along with plant competition from native species plants are reducing Canada thistle density and area coverage.

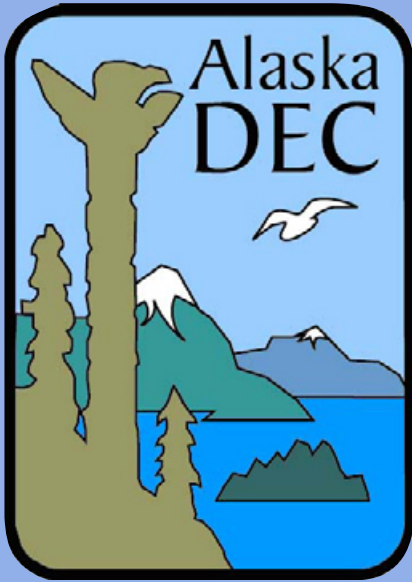
QUESTIONS

- What areas of high overlapping percentages be target sites for herbicide application?
- Mechanical treatments of 4 priority sites along Right-of-Ways established infestation?
- Canada thistle has been estimated to grow up to 3.5 m by 6 months (Hansen et al., 2002). How much of the newly established area are a result of new growth or are they a resurgence of field herbicide control?

FUTURE WORK AND OUTREACH

- Herbicide treatments of 4 priority sites along Right-of-Ways
- Continuing mechanical management to reduce seed bank and rhizome starches, and investigate the effects on less dense and newly established infestations
- Collaborate with more private property owners in establishing their site-specific management plan

Canada thistle outreach materials on display during the 2013 Invasive Species Conference, Fairbanks, AK.



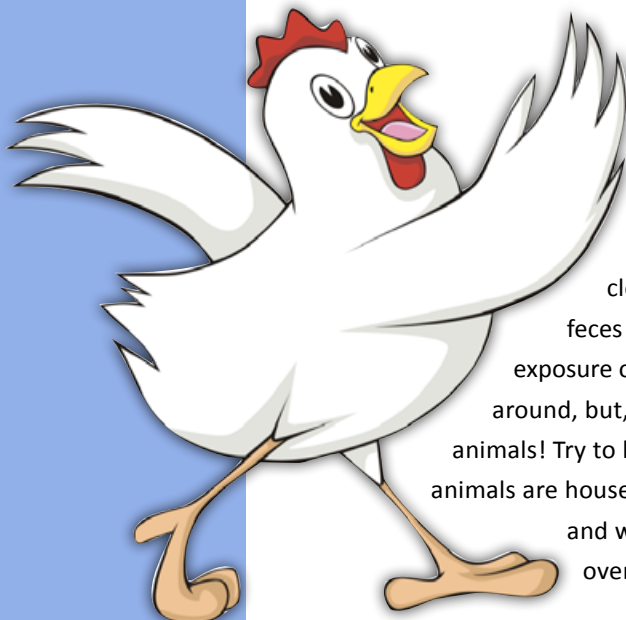
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Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation: Division of Environmental Health

Salmonella in Backyard Livestock

As the number of small livestock and poultry growers increase the more people are coming into contact with animals that can transmit bacterial pathogens such as: *Salmonella*, *E. coli*, and *Campylobacter*. These bacteria may have a range of effects on the animals from causing a severe illness to having mild symptoms. In the case of *Salmonella* certain strains are often associated with a particular species of animal; *S. choleraesuis* in pigs, *S. enteritidis* in chickens, *S. dublin* and *S. typhimurium* in cattle. The animals can adapt to living with the *Salmonellae* in their digestive tracts, often shedding the bacteria for a long time; it can be very hard to get rid of the contamination in the environment.

Small producers selling into the local food markets should be aware of the risk and look at ways to reduce this risk and prevent the spread of bacteria. We will use *salmonella* as an example.

One of the first areas to evaluate is animal feed. *Salmonella* is spread by animals being exposed to the feces of infected animals. Keep feeding areas clean and free of manure and store feed to avoid contamination from pests. Pests such as mice, rats and birds must be prevented from getting into the feed, so that they won't eat it, and won't defecate into it. Keep feed dry and store it in rodent proof containers. Storing it off the ground and away from the walls to allow air to circulate will also help prevent spoilage and contamination from molds which can be another big problem. Develop a pest control plan, put rodent traps in the feed room and around the farm and make sure wild birds don't have access either. With the high cost of feed you need to keep it clean and avoid wasting any.

You should keep the animal areas as clean as possible and change litter or bedding as needed. Keep nesting boxes clean for the layers. Collect eggs often, and discard any that are broken or cracked. It is better not to feed these broken eggs to pigs and the chickens, because you might be spreading some of these bacteria. Be careful about stocking density. Increasing herd or flock size can cause more stress among the animals and means an increased cleaning schedule for you. It is important to keep things clean and not to overpopulate your housing.

One other topic of importance is biosecurity. Set up a herd or flock health plan for your animals and have a set procedure for introducing new animals on to the farm so they don't bring in unwanted diseases or parasites. Visitors can carry diseases in on their clothes and boots. Boots can be very dirty and move feces from place to place with ease. Take steps to limit the exposure of your farm to visitors. You can invite folks to look around, but, they really don't need to be in the pen or handle the animals! Try to keep the trucks that go farm to farm away from where animals are housed and where people walk. Tires carry feces really well and workers can pick it up on their boots and walk it all over your farm.



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UNIVERSITY OF ALASKA FAIRBANKS

School of Natural Resources & Agricultural Sciences

Growth of CSAs in Alaska

Story contributed by Nancy Tarnai

A Google Map of community supported agriculture farms shows the growth of [Community Supported Agriculture](#) (CSA) in Alaska. Created by Deirdre Helfferich, managing editor at the [UAF School of Natural Resources and Agricultural Sciences](#), the map introduces 32 CSAs to viewers, providing basic information and contact sources for each farm.

Helfferich started collecting CSA names in 2009 because she couldn't find any resources containing that data. She has long been interested in local foods and served as a founding member of the [Alaska Food Policy Council](#). She and her husband have been CSA members at Calypso Farm and Ecology Center in Ester since 2001. "Back then there were only a couple of CSAs in the Interior," Helfferich said. "Now every year there are more and more."

Her map, <http://bit.ly/1csklxg>, has been visited nearly 79,000 times. She suspects researchers from the lower 48 and Canada are visiting the site, along with consumers who are searching for a CSA where they can buy locally-grown food and support local farms. "I've gotten really good feedback about the map," she said. "People really like it and the farmers appreciate being listed."

The site is fluid, with Helfferich continuing to add, delete and edit the CSAs on the map. She welcomes information on CSAs not currently listed. Contact her at dahelfferich@alaska.edu or 907-474-6923.

The satisfaction from creating the map for Helfferich is that she gets to share valuable information in a fun and free manner. She hopes that she is helping connect Alaskans to farmers in their communities. "It's about people working together to supply each other with food. That's the important thing."

Helfferich believes CSAs are successful because people want to be involved in food and get to know the people who farm it. "It's a really good thing for people to see things they would never see in a supermarket," she said. "You get to smell the flowers and engage yourself and your kids. It's a way of creating community with the farm and farmer."

Belonging to a CSA brings consumers to the realization that there are people behind the food, she said. "You form a connection. It isn't just an item wrapped in plastic."

As for the future of the map, Helfferich plans to keep tending it, and she is looking into upgrading to a newer version of Google Maps to add functionality.

She dreams of the day the placemarks on the map aren't just clustered on the road system, but are scattered around the vast land that is Alaska. "Look, there's nothing in Nome and there's nothing north of the Brooks Range," she said. "Maybe people will see where the gaps are, find a niche and open a new CSA."



Deirdre Helfferich, managing editor at the [UAF School of Natural Resources and Agricultural Sciences](#).