



Division of Agriculture Activities

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<http://dnr.alaska.gov/ag>

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To remove your name from our e-newsletter list [click here](#).

Questions or Comments? E-Mail me at Patricia.O'Neil@alaska.gov or call



Note From the Director

Summer is always a busy time – as Alaskans we try and make up for the day-light hours lost during the winter months and cram all those things that are normally done over a 12 month period into four or maybe five months. By the time September rolls around Alaskans are both exhausted and thankful for the darkness that evening brings. In an odd way the darkness is permission to slow down and perhaps rest a bit.

Speaking of endless hours of work – there have been several new agriculture ventures springing to life. I would like to congratulate Tanana Valley Meats for their hard work and success in receiving their USDA certification. It is encouraging to see private sector stepping in to fill a need of the Agriculture industry. They opened their doors, complete with their USDA certification on June 23rd.

Another slaughter facility is preparing for its maiden voyage. Bob and Nathan Mudd of Kodiak are putting the final touches on their Mobile Location Abattoir. This mobile slaughter facility will be transported to Sitkinak Island by barge and utilized this fall. The final product will be a shelf stable product through the process of retort packaging.

Just a few reminders – ARLF lowered their interest rates earlier this spring and all borrowers must go through the loan process to have their rates reduced. Contact the ARLF Loan Officer, Candy Easley for more information.

Please continue to keep the Division updated on your agriculture success stories and if you have pictures to share send them to the Division.

Have a safe and happy 4th of July!

Franci

Calendar Events—These events are those that we are currently aware of and this list may not be all inclusive. If you would like to have an event added on next months newsletter, please contact Patricia O'Neil @ Patricia.O'Neil@alaska.gov or 907-761-3858

- Delta Farm Tour— July 14th
- Mat-Su Farm Bureau Farm Tours—July 24th
- Southeast Fair (Haines) - July 30th—August 2nd
- Deltana Fair (Delta Junction) - July 31st—August 2nd
- See the Mat-Su CES website for more valley events: <http://mat-suces.weebly.com/calendar-of-events.html>

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Inspection Section

Good Handling Practices/Good Agricultural Practices (GHP/ GAP)

Over the past few years, increased attention has been directed toward the safety of the nation's food supply. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration, Federal and State Departments of Agriculture, private industry and grower groups are all working to develop and implement practices that help to ensure food safety, from farm to table.

The USDA Agricultural Marketing Service has developed a voluntary, audit-based program designed to verify that produce growers, shippers, and handlers



are adhering to recommendations made by the FDA to minimize food safety hazards for fresh fruits and vegetables. This program, called the Good Agricultural Practices and Good Handling Practices (GAP/GHP) Audit Verification Program, assesses a company's efforts to provide a safe product to the consumer. Various sections of the audit address areas such as farm and business management practices, employee training, temperature controls, facility engineering, cleanliness, and product recall abilities.

While farms and distributors are not required to have a GAP/GHP audit, many retailers and food distributors are now requiring them from their food suppliers, as a way to help ensure the safety of the product they sell.

The Alaska Division of Agriculture has Inspection Staff certified to conduct USDA GAP/GHP audits. If you would like more information about the audits, or more information about food safety practices in general, please contact The Division at 745-7200.

Marketing Services

Country of Origin Labeling (COOL)

With the increased attention given to food safety and security issues, have you become more aware of where your food comes from? At the Division of Agriculture (Division) we are always encouraging you to "Ask for Alaska GROWN," and "Buy Local," and "Support Alaskan Farmers," but we all know that there are some food items that simply cannot be grown in Alaska. And during certain times of year the list of available Alaska GROWN products gets pretty short.

So – how do you make informed decisions about your food purchases at the grocery store? The enforcement of a new law *should* give you more information to assist in those decisions. The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Country of Origin Labeling (COOL) law is now in effect at (most) retail establishments. The law provides that all covered commodities (see list) must be identified with country of origin information and where applicable (fish & shellfish) the method of production (wild caught or farm raised) must also be declared.

Although food safety is a concern, this is NOT a food safety law. It is a labeling law, designed to inform consumers of the origin of certain foods. The law requires inspection at the retail outlets to verify compliance. Division staff have been conducting COOL audits on fish & shellfish since 2006, and for all commodities on the list below since May 2009.

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Please note that Farmers Markets are opening statewide; check out the new Alaska Farmers Market Association web site www.alaskafarmersmarkets.org for a complete list of markets.

We also have a list available markets on our website at: http://dnr.alaska.gov/ag/ag_ms.htm

Marketing Services

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What does this mean for you? As a consumer it means more information to impact your buying decisions. As a producer it could mean more paperwork and record keeping. If you sell farm products directly to a retail outlet (such as CARRS or Fred Meyer) or to a wholesale distributor (such as FSA or Di-Tomaso's) you will be required to both label your products and provide COOL information on your invoices, shipping documents, etc.

List of Covered Commodities:

Fish and Shellfish

Muscle cuts of beef, lamb, chicken, goat and pork

Ground: beef, lamb, chicken, goat and pork

Fresh & frozen fruits & vegetables

Peanuts, Macadamia nuts, and Pecans

Ginseng

Covered commodities are excluded from the law if the commodity is an ingredient in a processed food item as defined by the law.

For more information about USDA COOL visit www.ams.usda.gov/cool or contact Amy Pettit.

Alaska Peony Growers Association Summer Workshop

The Alaska Peony Growers Association (APGA) will be having their summer workshop and farm tours August 1-3 on the Kenai Peninsula. Sunday August 1st and Monday August 2nd will be restricted to current APGA members; Tuesday August 3rd will be open to the public, with a registration limit of 100 people.

If you are interested in participating in the event – please be sure your dues are paid in full to APGA. The APGA membership application can be found at www.alaskapeonies.org under the "About Us" link.

The meeting will include classroom/workshop discussions, presentations by various APGA members, visiting the farms of four APGA members, as well as featured guest speakers Jim & Carol Adelman of Peony Paradise www.peonyparadise.com.

The full agenda will be available at both the Division and the APGA web sites after July 15th. For more information contact Amy Pettit, 907-761-3864

Mat-Su Farm Bureau Farm Tours

On July 24th, the Mat-Su Farm Bureau is planning Mat-Su Farm Tours and will be visiting one of the largest produce growers in Alaska, the Mat Valley Creamery, a Colonist-era small family farm, a USDA organic producer, and they will be going by the U-Pick farm and the Plant Materials Center. The tour will begin at 8 am with a bus pick-up in Anchorage with a Mat-Su farmer sharing about farming in the last frontier. The day will also include an all Alaska Grown lunch!

We are excited to see the outreach to the general public, in an effort to increase their awareness of farming in Alaska, and to see "behind the scenes", to give greater appreciation to the Alaska Grown food they eat!

Land Sales & Grazing Leases

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Land Sales & Grazing Leases

There has been a change in the Division of Agriculture's plan to hold land auctions this summer. New policies are requiring us to resurvey and reappraise a number of parcels that were scheduled for disposal this summer. Three of the four parcels in the Johnson Road area, ADL 416786, ADL 407096, ADL 407086, are affected by the new policy and will not be offered until next year. The parcel near Harding Lake, ADL 407098, is not affected at this point and may be combined with a parcel, ADL 417070, in the Two Mile Agriculture project, ~ 12 miles northeast of Nenana, and two in the Kobe Agriculture project, ADL 415462 and ADL 415470, and offered for disposal this fall. For any information about these parcels and timing of this sale please call Dan Proulx in the Fairbanks office at (907) 374-3716.

We apologize for the delay in these disposals but it is impossible to fulfill the new requirements needed by Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and still have a sale this summer as previously planned. Please keep checking the [DNR land sale page](#) for information about the next sale. When the brochure is ready for the next sale, a notice will appear on the land sale page. We will try and get the webmaster to allow people to sign up to receive an email when the brochure is ready.

While we prepare for this upcoming sale we are already looking ahead to bigger sales next year and beyond. We are working on developing agriculture land in the Nenana Totchaket area as well as larger parcels in the Kobe North area. We will continue to look for individual parcels to add to these larger sales.

Please bear with us while we incorporate these new procedures into our land disposal process. The end result will be less confusion and less misunderstanding for everyone. Thank you.

Plant Materials Center (PMC)

Barley at the PMC

The UAF Agricultural and Forestry Experiment Station released 'Sunshine', a new hullless barley to the Plant Materials Center last fall. 'Sunshine' does have somewhat of a hull, but it is attached so loosely to the seed that it is easily removed during harvesting. Research assistant Bob VanVeldhuizen, along with other researchers have been working on this barley for many years and it was created by crossing 'Thual' barley and a Finnish variety. 'Sunshine' is adapted for northern climates and yields close to 2,500 pounds per acre.



The Plant Materials Center planted 'Sunshine' this spring and foundation seed will be available to growers in spring 2010. Once farmers decide to grow 'Sunshine' barley, they should find that compared to the price of hulled barley (\$100 to \$200 per ton), 'Sunshine' should bring in \$5 to \$10 for a one pound bag.

Cooperative Extension performed a variety of kitchen tests against other barleys and it was determined that 'Sunshine' would be a highly marketable product due to its nutritional content and flavor. Another plus for barley is that the flour is gluten-free, great news for those with certain allergies.

Look for 'Sunshine' barley next year at the Plant Materials Center!!!

UAF photo of Sunshine Barley at Fairbanks Experimental Plot

Pest Detection Surveys in Alaska

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Large black exotic slugs have been moving north in Alaska. Other than home gardens, very little damage has been reported, and several people have asked "Why are they a concern?" In fact, the main food source of the exotic slugs appears to be dog feces and dandelion seeds.

However, in some communities, such as Cordova and Ketchikan, the slugs appear to be moving out into the native vegetation, and we aren't sure what the resulting impacts may be. The slugs usually show up around plant nurseries where potted plants and balled and bur lapped trees have been imported.

They also seem to be associated with old fish canneries where fish totes and other shipping containers have been offloaded.



There is a European black slug called 'Arion ater' and a European red slug called 'Arion rufus'. Arion ater has never been reported in the United States, but numerous people have assumed that the exotic black slug moving north in Alaska is Arion ater. However, geneticists tell us that the European black slug in Alaska is not Arion ater, but most likely a black color

cohort of Arion rufus (which has been reported in the Western United States for many years) or possibly an ARVC complex, hybrid of the Arion rufus and vulgaris species. The Division of Agriculture has been submitting specimens to a diagnostic laboratory on the east coast to try to sort out this identification.

Regardless of the scientific name of the slugs, they are moving into new communities each year and moving northward, apparently aided by box stores moving large amounts of plant materials into northern communities. The Division of Agriculture has conducted slug and snail surveys in South-Eastern Alaska in 2007, in parts of South Central Alaska in 2008, and will continue with surveys in the Anchorage basin and Matanuska Valley in 2009. These slugs are not regulated pests, but may be of increasing concern as they move into Agricultural areas and outward from communities into native vegetation.



Photos, in order of appearance: *European red slug, Ketchikan, AK; European red slug, black color phase, Cordova, AK; Native Banana slug, Ketchikan, AK.*

