

# The Dirt

*Issues Facing MD of Bighorn Landowners  
- From Barnyard to Backyard -*

## **Bighorn Happenings**

*by Dwight Tannas, Environmental Fieldman*

Is spring finally here? This has been a long long winter. I heard one weather man say that we have had snow cover for 120 straight days. It is also a little worrying in that we have a large snow pack and there could be the threat of flooding.

Our year has started off with some very successful events:

The Provincial Agricultural Services Board Conference was one of the best in years. Of course we were updated by Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development on many of the initiatives that our provincial municipalities will be doing with them. The Agricultural Pest Act is presently being reviewed and updated. The new Weed Control Act has been in effect for a season and the province is living up to their word that both rural and urban municipalities must comply with the Act. Keynote Speaker, Wendy Mesley, left us with food for thought. What does the label "Product of Canada" mean? A good example of this is that Salmon caught in Russian waters, processed in China and shipped in a frozen state to Nova Scotia for final packaging is considered a "Product of Canada". In fact the only thing Canadian about the product is the cardboard box and label. Roy Rutledge, columnist for "Alberta Beef Magazine" presented an excellent presentation on the Future of Canadian Beef Industry. Other interesting presentations from Kevin Hursh, Jeffrey Lowes and Phillip Shaw gave us much to think about and discuss with the over 400 delegates to this annual conference. Only one of the 11 resolutions were defeated. The Emergent Resolution on the Federal Bill C-544 which deals with the prevention of import or export of horses for slaughter and horse meat products brought much discussion. The final decision was unanimous. All rural municipalities in Alberta see the importance of retaining the sale of horses for human and pet consumption. This is an important industry in Alberta. In the USA, the banning has resulted in destruction of grazing lands as unwanted horses have been abandoned on Public Lands, resulting in overgrazing. Instead of utilizing the animals they have been left to starve and are being predated by large carnivores.

The "Ranching Opportunities" workshop that five neighbouring municipalities, a couple of NGO's, Olds College and ourselves put on annually was the most successful in years. 185 people participated. The main topics were Breeding Trends, Cattle Buyers "What Consumers Are Looking For", Mob Grazing, low stress handling and carcass ultra sounding. I must thank the college students on our organizational committee for the efforts they put forth.

Our annual "Living in the Natural Environment" event was the most successful one in many years. One hundred and thirty one

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**The Dirt is published approximately  
three times per year to specifically  
address issues of the natural  
environment and rural life throughout  
our municipality.**

**If you have an issue you'd like us to  
tackle, please email**

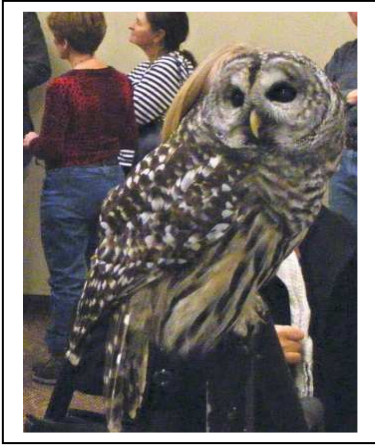
**Dwight Tannas at**

**dwright.tannas@mdbighorn.ca**

**or give him a call at either:**

**403-673-3611 or 403-233-7678.**

**We encourage your suggestions and  
feedback.**



people participated. This again included participants from many of our neighbouring municipalities. Dr. Ross McKenzie, Research Scientist-Agronomy, Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development gave a presentation on “Urbanization and Loss of Prime Agricultural Land” was very well received and generated much discussion among all of us attending. Gordon Court, Provincial Wildlife Status Biologist, Alberta Fish and Wildlife and his buddy Colonel Slade (a Barred Owl) gave a most entertaining and informative presentation on “Owls, Owlers and Owling – The Silent Predator and Our Obsession with Them”. We are gearing up for the coming season and are planning workshops for the early spring. We hope you all have a great spring and if you have any questions or requests please contact us.

## Defining Fragmented Land

*By Will Davies, Assistant Environmental Fieldman*

What is your understanding of this now more commonly used phrase? This phrase is wrongly becoming accepted to mean ‘land of less value’. It is only an implied meaning and does not promote the integral ecologic functions of land as a part of a functioning ecosystem. Fragmented land parcels are simply physically separated due to natural or man-made features. Fragmented land does not mean now not whole, not complete, disconnected or dysfunctional – “Oh it’s fragmented.” Fragmentation of land is not synonymous with waste.

When this interpretation is used and accepted we render the only good purposeful use of the land is development for economic return – seen as good economic development. Municipalities in Alberta enact Land Use Bylaws and Municipal Development Plans that define what is meant by fragmented land. The land has only been fragmented by way of description for planning purposes. An example definition would be: Lands which are physically fragmented by way of forced roads, water courses, railways or any natural barriers or land features.

Fragmented Land has another purpose other than development. It is to our benefit to still recognize that the land was once part of a whole ecosystem complex. It has not been diminished in importance simply due to man imposed descriptors or definitions. Non-use of the ‘fragmented’ descriptor still leaves us with natural land requiring conservation and protection. We should try to understand that when fragmented land is only viewed as “developable” we are in reality subtracting land function from the whole of the ecological system. The loss of undisturbed, intact natural ecosystem functions will be to our detriment. Whole areas where only natural features interrupt homogeneous landscape must remain: there is no fragmentation! Undisturbed ecosystems function as a unit. These functioning landform ecosystems support habitats for life diversity and needed ecological goods and services. Historically, evidence of habitat destruction is through natural processes such as volcanism, fire and climate change. The reason for more current, aggravated habitat fragmentation is – human use. Native vegetation is essentially cleared for human activities such as agriculture, rural development, urbanization, creation of hydroelectric reservoirs and linear disturbances (pipelines, powerlines, etc.). The land fragments become very small islands isolated from each other by cropland, pasture, pavement or areas of natural resource harvest and extraction. As land development continues, a greater need for ecosystem planning is required to integrate land ecosystems not segregate them. Land development and planning of land must be inclusive of land preservation and conservation. Ecosystem economies understand the benefits of intact systems: we minimize impact by managing impact for ecological function. FRAGMENTED LAND is important – is of value – is of benefit to us now and to those who live here in the future. It is IMPORTANT to maintain this awareness.



*Will the future be about smiling?*

# Invasive Plant/Weed Wise

By Will Davies Assistant Environmental Fieldman

Spring and summer of 2011 will soon be upon us. It will soon be time again for producers to get “back on the land” - active in the growing business of farming. Acreage and home owners will get outside to take care of all things that grow, and outdoor enthusiasts will travel trails, pathways and waterways enjoying all that spring and summer in Alberta has to offer. It is also time again to be **Weed Wise**.

If you are not already weed wise, pursue the skills to becoming weed wise by creating awareness for yourself regarding Invasive Plants (weeds). This is a worthy goal for producers, acreage owners and outdoor enthusiasts. A very good web site to learn from is produced by Alberta Invasive Plants Council [www.invasiveplants.ab.ca](http://www.invasiveplants.ab.ca). When not recognized early and destroyed, weeds infest, and then can later become established on MD lands. The MD of Bighorn includes lands classified as forest reserve, wildland parks, native reserve, grazing reserve, pasture, hay and grain production farmland, hamlets and summer villages. Hamlets, acreages etc., personal gardens and human built landscapes are entry points for many kinds of non-native plants. Property owners can help by removing invasive non-native plants from their gardens. The Trans Canada highway, highways 1A and 68 and the Forestry Trunk Road are main arteries of travel. There is vibrant movement of people and vehicles throughout all of the roads in MD lands. People and vehicle movement facilitates the transfer of weed seeds and non-native plants into these lands. Establishment of non-native plants/invasive weeds pose a significant threat to agricultural producers in the MD as well as an ecological threat to native plant and wildlife communities. The most effective way to control the establishment of invasive plant species is to prevent it. This is why becoming and remaining invasive plant/weed wise is of importance in the MD.

Your **Agricultural Fieldman Dwight Tannas** and **Assistant Will Davies** are the resource people in the MD when weed/invasive plant questions or issues arise.

Remaining weed wise means: to be aware of new invasive plant (weed) threats. The battle against weeds has been a progressive one ever since settlers came to the west. Arrival of settlers onto the prairies and into Alberta mostly began in the 1860's. The Canadian Federal Government was active in wanting

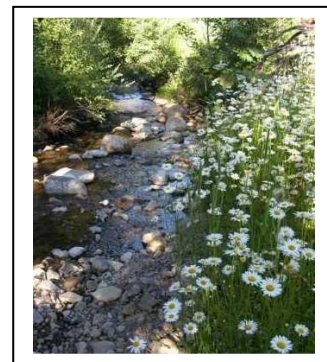
to populate the vast regions of western Canada before the United States was able to do so - the rest is history. Moving ahead to the 1940's, in Alberta, agricultural production increased to the point where advice and help on problems associated with farming such as; invasive plants, farming techniques, pests, crop varieties etc., were needed. It was then that in Alberta, Agricultural Service Boards (ASB) were established to deal with these issues. Weed spread, weed control and awareness of and knowledge about new weeds remain a main priority for Alberta ASB's. Here are a few of the new weed threats to the MD and a reminder to you of some current ones as well.

**New and Old Weed Threats** The following weed/invasive plants are listed in the Province of Alberta Weed Control Act, Alberta Regulation 19/2010. Weeds are grouped into two categories: Prohibited Noxious – **must destroy** Noxious – **must control**.

## **Oxeye Daisy** (*Leucanthemum vulgare*)

This plant is listed **Noxious**. If you see it - control it. This plant is in the MD and well established west into Banff Park. It continues to be a threat. If it escapes into native pasture or forestry areas it will out - compete native plant cover and take over. It is very hard to control. Pulling is useless and only cosmetic. If seen or unsure, contact us at the MD office for identification and control.

These plants are just some of the numerous invasive weed plants present in the MD. If you are unsure about weedy plant problems you are dealing with, we encourage you to contact the Environmental Fieldmen for the MD of Bighorn. We have the resources to help with the identification, eradication or control.



Cont'd on next page...

## Orange Hawkweed (*Hieracium aurantiacum*



L.) A potential **new weed** threat. This plant is listed **Prohibited Noxious**. If you see it - destroy it. It is not “new” to Alberta but is

moving south from west central municipalities i.e., County of Ponoka. Don't dig this plant up to transplant. If seen in your fields destroy it. If unsure, contact us at the MD office for identification and chemical eradication.

## Spotted Knapweed (*Centaurea stoebe* L.)



This plant is listed **Prohibited Noxious**. If you see it – destroy it. It is not “new” to Alberta but is moving east from central and southern B.C. If

has ruined hectares of grazing potential on native ranges in B.C. It is in our MD. Don't dig this plant up to transplant. If seen in your fields destroy it. If unsure, contact us at the MD office for identification and chemical eradication.

## Tall Buttercup (*Ranunculus acris* L.)



This plant is listed **Noxious**. If you see it – control it. This plant is in the MD and is moving-in from forestry areas, grazing reserves and pasture to the north. It may appear as a “pretty” ornamental or

wildflower addition to your landscape area but do not transplant this plant. If seen or unsure, contact us at the MD offices for identification and control methods.

[www.mdbighorn.ca](http://www.mdbighorn.ca)

## Bighorn Workshops

Last spring a successful series of Native Wildflower Workshops were offered throughout Bighorn. Again this year, through Bighorn's ASB and Fieldmen, we will be conducting similar workshops. Communities where workshops are planned to be held are: Harvie Heights, Benchlands, Water Valley and West Jumpingpound/Sibbald Flats. Topics of interest we plan to cover at the workshops are:

- Invasive plants. Identification and control methods.
- Calibration and safe use of backpack sprayers for chemical control of weeds around acreages or walk-in only accessible areas.
- Propagation and growing Alberta native wildflowers
- Agroforestry and Woodlot Development, Tree Pests and Diseases with Agroforestry Specialist Doug Macaulay, P.Ag. P. Biol, Alberta Agriculture.
- Discussion about Alberta's new Weed Control Act
- Problem predator wildlife control
- Other topics of importance to producers, land and acreage owners.

For up to date information on Where - When – What refer to the Bighorn website at [www.mdbighorn.ca](http://www.mdbighorn.ca) A complete program of events and topics will also be listed in The Dirt Summer Program Update or just please give us a call at the MD Office.



*Figure 1: Jim Bauer demonstrating how to check power to electric fencing. Ladies Livestock Lessons, Pine Lake 2010. An MD of Bighorn cooperative effort with surrounding municipalities.*

## Don't Fight Them – Utilize Them!!!

### TO YOUR HEALTH!

Dandelions have been recognized for centuries as a tonic (especially good for the liver) and as a rich source of vitamins and minerals. 100 grams (1/4 pound) of dandelion leaves contain the following nutrients: food energy (45 kcal), protein (2.7 g), fat (0.7 g), total carbohydrate (0.2), crude fiber (1.6 g), thiamine (0.19 mg), riboflavin (0.28 mg), vitamin C (35 mg), vitamin A (1400 RE), and minerals (ash: 1.8 g), including Ca (209 mg), P (64 mg), Na (73), K (422 mg), Mg (51.5 mg), Cu (0.3 mg), Fe (4.1 mg), Mn (0.7 mg) and Cl (329 mg). A dandelion salad or dandelion cocktail is both delicious and nutritious, but some prefer a sweeter tonic made with flowers

#### Dandelion Wine

4 qts. Dandelion blossoms (remove bitter stems)  
1/2 lb. raisins  
1 gal. boiling water  
1 package yeast  
2 lemons, thinly sliced  
1 tsp. sugar  
2 oranges, thinly sliced  
1 cup warm water  
3 pounds white sugar  
Cover the blossoms with boiling water; let stand 24 hours, squeeze and strain. Simmer the liquid with the lemons, oranges and sugar for 20 minutes, and then set aside to cool. Dissolve the yeast + 1 tsp. sugar in the warm water. Add this and the raisins to the liquid. Pour into a gallon jug capped with a balloon or a crock covered with cheesecloth. Allow to ferment 14 days, skin, strain and re-bottle.

#### Dandelion Pesto

2 cups washed, dried and tightly packed dandelion greens  
1-2 tbsp. dried herb of choice (basil, thyme, savory, or others)  
2-3 cloves garlic crushed and left to air for a few minutes  
1 cup sunflower seeds  
1/2 cup olive oil  
1 cup grated Parmesan or Romano cheese  
Dried herbs may be used, however fresh are preferable. Add each ingredient one at a time in a food processor until completely blended. Drizzle in the olive oil to allow it combine thoroughly. Same for the cheese. Just add a bit at a time so it can become completely blended. Hand chopping and working your pesto is best but food processors do cut down on your time. Blenders work well also if you do not have a food processor. Fold into cooked pasta until the pasta is completely coated with pesto. Add diced black olives, fresh diced Roma tomatoes, diced fresh mushrooms and/or diced summer squash to create a pesto recipe all your own.

## What Weeds Should I Control?

It seems that every year I get more complaints about dandelions than any other weed. In fact the Dandelion is not on the weed list and municipalities have no authority to anyone control it. However many people who complain about Dandelions have weeds that are illegal to grow on their property. A complete list and identification booklet is available on the Wheatland County website at <http://www.wheatlandcounty.ca/files/ID%20Book%202010%20-%20Final%20-%20Copy.pdf> or by link on our website [www.mdbighorn.ca](http://www.mdbighorn.ca)  
The Act and Regulations are available at the Queens Printer [www.qp.alberta.ca](http://www.qp.alberta.ca) The Regulations will give you a list of weeds that are to be controlled.  
[http://www.qp.alberta.ca/574.cfm?page=2010\\_019.cfm&leg\\_type=Regs&isbncln=9780779748150](http://www.qp.alberta.ca/574.cfm?page=2010_019.cfm&leg_type=Regs&isbncln=9780779748150)  
If you have any problems with Identification please give us a call. A reminder that most of the ones listed as Prohibited Noxious are not present in the province as of yet but are a threat if they become established. They are listed as a precaution.

# Pocket Gophers, Squirrels and Other Rodents

By Will Davies, Assistant Environmental Fieldman

As winter snowdrifts slowly melt and recede, forming pools of water in roadside ditches look carefully and you may spot something of interest on top of the ground. Have you ever noticed black-grayish, tubular-like or mound-like shapes? Something has been very active under a blanket of snow all winter long. Hay, forage producers or range managers know what the strange shapes are and what they mean. Noticing them along a roadside ditch or fence line means they are also in the field. In the field they cause equipment problems at haying time and are places for weed seed germination and growth. The shapes are soil surface



Figure 1 Mole

Squirrels (Red Squirrel is common), Ground Squirrels (Gopher: the common one is Richardson's), Voles, Beavers, Mice, Chipmunks etc., but no Moles. The Northern Pocket Gopher is so called because of two pouch-like pockets in the cheek (Fig. 2). Here they store niblets of roots, i.e. dandelion, alfalfa, carrots (love them). This is probably why you think there is a mole in the carrot row of your garden. They have massive, lower jaw incisor teeth and must chew continuously. Soil appears on the ground as the pocket gopher guides tunnelled material to the surface with its head and forefeet until the soil is moved to a side



Figure 2 Pocket Gopher

40 to 150 meters in length with several mounds in-line along their length. This rodent mates only once a year. In late May, three to six young are born underground in a grass-lined nest. Northern pocket gophers seldom travel above ground. When they do, they are prey for owls, hawks, coyotes, etc. Ideal habitat is deep, light textured soils. They tend to avoid rocky, forested or waterlogged soils. So, there are no moles in your holes, they are Northern Pocket Gophers. If you need assistance with how to trap this tunnelling rodent pest please contact the Agricultural Fieldman's office.

tunnels or soil mounds. What we are talking about is the winter tunnelling activity of the Northern Pocket Gopher (*Thomomys talpoides*). Mistakenly they are referred to as moles (Fig.1). Their ground dwelling, tunneling resembles that of a mole, but it isn't a mole. There are no

moles in Alberta. Among other rodents in Alberta are, Tree

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network of shallow below the surface tunnels can be

## Websites of Interest

### Alberta

#### Invasive Plant Council

*Pictures and fact sheets of weeds!*

[www.invasiveplants.ab.ca](http://www.invasiveplants.ab.ca)

#### Alberta Agriculture

[www.agric.gov.ab.ca](http://www.agric.gov.ab.ca)

#### Alberta Stewardship Network

[www.stewardshipcanada.ca](http://www.stewardshipcanada.ca)

#### Alberta Native Plant Council

[www.anpc.ab.ca](http://www.anpc.ab.ca)

#### Alberta Conservation Association

[www.ab-conservation.com](http://www.ab-conservation.com)

#### Alberta Environment

[www.environment.gov.ab.ca](http://www.environment.gov.ab.ca)

#### Sustainable Resource

#### Development

[www.srd.gov.ab.ca](http://www.srd.gov.ab.ca)

#### For Alberta Acts and

#### Regulations

The Queens Printer

[www.gov.ab.ca/qp](http://www.gov.ab.ca/qp)

780 427- 4952

#### AFSC

Agricultural Financial Services

Corporation

[www.afsc.ca](http://www.afsc.ca)

403 948- 8543

#### Livestock Inspection Service

[www.lis-alberta.com](http://www.lis-alberta.com)

#### Brand Inspector

403 934 2544

#### FOR MORE INFORMATION

#### Dwight Tannas

Environmental Fieldman

Phone 403 673 3611

Calgary Direct: 403 233 7678

[dwight.tannas@mdbighorn.ca](mailto:dwight.tannas@mdbighorn.ca)