



December 3, 2014

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

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Questions or Comments?
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The Division of Agriculture Activities



Director's Note

It is hard to believe that Christmas is just around the corner and the New Year is almost upon us. Looking out the window, one would have assumed that December snuck up on Mother Nature – as the ground remained void of any substantial snow until now!

November is always a busy month, and this year was no exception. Both the Farmer's Union and Farm Bureau hold their annual meetings during this time. Unfortunately, I was out of town for the Annual Farmer's Union Meeting and unable to attend; but I was back in time to attend the Annual Farm Bureau Meeting. Both of these groups provide benefits to their members and I encourage you to invite your friends and family to join. Nationally, these groups are a powerful voice and a great opportunity to have your voices heard; on the state level – local producers working together to support issues that benefit the agriculture community as a whole.

I would like to congratulate the Alaska Food Policy Council for their efforts in organizing and implementing The Alaska Food Festival and Conference. The event was a great success, was well attended and highlighted many important issues facing Alaska; including food production.

The Division of Agriculture, in cooperation with Mining, Land, and Water held a fall agriculture land sale. The sale included a single 100 acre parcel with a ten acre clearing requirement. Minimum bid was set at \$40,500; six bids were received, of which the high bid was \$46,678.00. If you would like to be notified of upcoming sales please sign up at <http://dnr.alaska.gov/mlw/landsale/email/>.

Please take the time to peruse through the newsletter and mark your calendar for the upcoming events and conferences. If you are in the Palmer area on Dec. 16th, from 12:00 – 2:00; please bring your favorite side dish and stop by and visit during the PMC's Annual Holiday Open House.

I wish you and your family a Merry Christmas and a healthy and prosperous new year. As always, if you have any questions or concerns please give me a call at 907-761-3867 or send me an email at franci.havemeister@alaska.gov.

~Franci Havemeister

When we recall Christmas past, we usually find that the simplest things - not the great occasions - give off the greatest glow of happiness. ~Bob Hope



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Agriculture Calendar

• **Thur. Dec. 18th**

Board of Agriculture Conservation Meeting.

Division of Agriculture Office, 1800 Glenn Hwy., Suite 12, Palmer. 1 pm. *Details:* [here](#)

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



Marketing Section

Specialty Crop Competitive Grant Grantee Final Reports Available Online

The Division of Agriculture (DOA) offers the Specialty Crop Competitive Grant (SCCG) annually. The purpose of this grant is to enhance the competitiveness of *specialty crops. The DOA first offered this grant opportunity in 2010 and projects have ranged from one to three years in duration.

Now available on the DOA website are two Final Reports from SCCG recipients:

1. Ralph Carney – Potato Wedge Project
 - a. The purpose of this pilot project was to gauge the feasibility of using Alaska Grown potatoes to make wedges that could be served in school cafeterias.
2. Fairbanks Economic Development Corp. – Interior Alaska Marketing Analysis
 - a. The purpose of this project was to conduct a market analysis of Interior farmers in order to find out the demand for local food in that area.

To view these Final Reports, visit: http://dnr.alaska.gov/ag/ag_grantsSCCGR.htm

*Specialty crops are defined as fruits, vegetables, dried fruit, tree nuts, and nursery crops.



FARM TO SCHOOL UPDATE

Farm to School Conference Update



If you are interested in attending the Farm to School conference be sure to sign-up by December 15th. We are currently at capacity and will increase conference space if there is enough interest. You can view the agenda, speaker list, and producer showcase at http://dnr.alaska.gov/ag/pdf/FTSconference2014_agenda.pdf.

We are also thrilled to see people registered from all over the state: Mountain Village, Barrow, Kodiak, Aniak, Nome, Cordova, and much more! There are still a few travel scholarships available if you require financial assistance to get to the conference.

For updates, news, grant opportunities, and announcements join our listserv at: <http://list.state.ak.us/soalists/akfarmtoschool/jl.htm>

For more information about the Alaska Farm-to-School program, or if you have any questions, contact Johanna Herron at Johanna.herron@alaska.gov or (907) 761-3870.



Sons of Norway Directors Award

On November 15th both Sig Restad and Sons of Norway received a Directors Award in recognition of their dedication, promotion, and support of Alaska Grown.

Over the last 14 years Sig sourced over 80,000 pounds of Alaska Grown carrots, cabbage, and potatoes for events at the Sons of Norway meetings. This consistent support is what paves the way and sets the precedent for a stronger food system in Alaska.

Sons of Norway was founded as a fraternal organization in Minnesota in 1895. Today it has a membership of nearly 60,000 with members in the United States, Canada, and Norway. The membership centers on local lodges such as the Bernt Balchen Lodge in Anchorage, Alaska. There are hundreds of other lodges in the United States, Canada, and Norway. In Alaska there are about half-a-dozen active lodges with about 300 members in Bernt Balchen Lodge.

The mission of Sons of Norway is to promote and to preserve the heritage and culture of Norway, to celebrate its relationship with other Nordic Countries, and provide quality insurance and financial products to our members. Bernt Balchen Lodge was founded over 70 years ago and like so many other lodges it celebrates Scandinavian culture and heritage through eating traditional Norwegian and other Nordic foods such as lefse (a thin potato and flour cake that looks like a tortilla). Ted Birkedal, President of Bernt Balchen Lodge shares, "Many of the lodge events center around food. These include the Faar-i-Kaal (Cabbage and Lamb) dinner, the Lutefisk and Lefse Dinner, the Scandinavian Brunch, and the Norwegian Fish Dinner. Almost all of our vegetables for these meals come from the Valley through the generosity of Sig Restad. So, we enjoy fresh Alaskan food at all our food events. What is grown in the Valley is very similar to the foods that are grown in Norway--potatoes, carrots, cabbage, and rutabagas so they fit very well with our traditional meals."



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Pest Detection / Inspection Section

Federal Regulations Pertaining to the Interstate Movement of Christmas Trees & Wreaths

Season's Greetings to All!

In order to help prevent the movement of pests that can harm agriculture and our natural resources, we would like to take this opportunity to inform you of the USDA regulations regarding the interstate movement of Christmas trees and wreaths. Because of the growing trend to market live Christmas trees and wreaths on the internet, this information will help ensure that your product can move without impediment, while helping to prevent the movement of pests that, if established, 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 that 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 www.aphis.usda.gov/HolidayGreeneryPests 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 can be found at http://www.aphis.usda.gov/wps/portal/banner/contactus/sa_plant_health/
3. 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.



Plant Materials Center

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

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Plant Materials Center (PMC)

Peter Johnson Joins PMC Staff



Peter 'Pete' Johnson joined the PMC staff on November 3rd as an Agronomist and will be working with the Native Seed Production team and Invasive Plant Management Coordinator.

Pete has an extensive background in agriculture and invasive plants and holds a bachelors degree from the University of Wisconsin-River Falls in Broad Area Agriculture and Agronomy. He previously worked with the United States Forest Service (USFS) where he led a plant ecology crew on the Glacier Ranger

District in Girdwood. It was there that he conducted field surveys, led crews and volunteers conducting invasive plant eradication, was involved with public outreach and education for all ages, and aided in the development of new programs for invasive plant management and habitat restoration. When he is not attending to his work duties you will most often find Pete exploring backcountry areas and trails, probably pulling any invasive weeds he can find along the way!

To welcome Pete call 907-745-8105 or email him at Peter.Johnson@alaska.gov.

PMC Annual Open House and Holiday Potluck



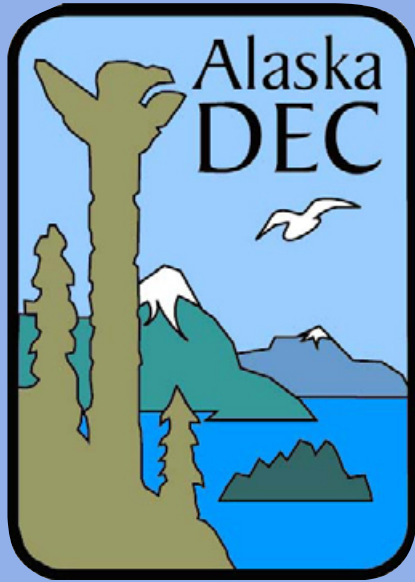
Please join the Plant Materials staff for their annual open house and holiday potluck on

December 16th at noon - 2 pm.

Please bring a dish to share and your holiday cheer!

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Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation: Division of Environmental Health

Ergot and Fescue Toxicity

We have received occasional inquiries related to ergot or fescue toxicity so the following is some general background information. Forages such as fescues and rye grass are most commonly associated with poisoning in livestock. The alkaloid toxins may be produced in tall fescue forage or in the seeds/grains contaminated with an endophytic fungus. This often occurs during the lush stages of growth during springtime or when fall rains follow a dry summer in the rapidly growing flower and seed head. Ergot also grows on rye, triticale, wheat, barley in addition to the grass forage. The fungus is spread by the affected seed, contaminating next year's forage.

Ergot can be seen as small black or purple bodies on the seed head of plants or in grains as blackened pieces of seed. Cool, damp, spring and summer weather appears to favor the growth of the fungus and development of ergot toxins. The first symptoms seen in livestock are often pain and swelling in the hind legs but other signs may be noted. This is caused by constriction of the blood vessels and resulting poor blood circulation. In severe cases this can cause localized death of the affected skin or muscle tissue. The resulting gangrene can cause loss of the tail, hooves, ears or teats.

Ergot poisoning may cause different symptoms in cattle, swine, sheep, and horses depending on the animal's general health and body condition; and whether they eat a small amount of toxin over a long period of time or get one large dose over a short period. In addition, symptoms in livestock can vary since there are several different types of ergot toxins. Other symptoms may include: increased body temperature, poor growth, reduced or loss of milk production, abortion or prolonged pregnancy. Some of these mild symptoms often go unnoticed.

Reports of the fungus in feed have increased in recent years in western Canada because of a combination of favorable weather for its formation and improved abilities to detect it in feed samples. Diagnosis can be made if you see the discoloration of the seed heads of the forage or blackened seed grains; send a sample to a lab that specializes in testing of fungus toxins for confirmation. The ergot or the endophytes do not give off any unusual or musty odor. Contact your local veterinarian or Cooperative Extension agent for additional information.

Merck to Provide Online Education for Livestock and Horse Owners

The animal health company, Merck, is working with veterinarians to provide web based education and training programs for livestock and horse owners.

The site, 'Creating Connections', was started last month covering some selected topics related to livestock husbandry and horsemanship. The site will be updated and expanded with more videos each month to provide livestock owners access to educational opportunities. This may be a great resource for livestock farmers and 4-H Leaders. No matter how much experience you may have it is always good to keep up on new technologies or experiences from other experts in the field. For more information visit: <http://www.creatingconnections.info/Home/Resources>





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UNIVERSITY OF ALASKA FAIRBANKS

School of Natural Resources and Extension

Deltana Canola Developed at UAF

Story contributed by Nancy Tarnai

One of a kind agricultural research in the U.S. is being conducted at the University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF) where agricultural scientists are growing non-genetically modified Polish canola.

Canadians began releasing canola as an edible product during World War II. The UAF work hails back to the 1970s when rapeseed trials were conducted for industrial oil, not for foodstock.

“It’s difficult to get breeding stock for canola,” Professor Mingchu Zhang said. “We have to meet market standards to produce edible seeds, less than 2 percent green seeds.”

The most recent development has been dubbed Deltana canola but the release of the crop is not official yet. “It’s open pollinated and difficult to prove the genetics,” Zhang explained. The crop can be used for cooking oil and meal for animal feed.

A Delta Junction farmer, Bryce Wrigley, tested Deltana last summer on five acres, with a comparison trial of five acres of A.C. Sunbeam as the standard. “He got acceptable yields,” Zhang said. “Both Deltana and Sunbeam had less than 2 percent green seeds.”

The Interior is a good climate for growing Polish canola, Zhang said. “There is very high potential if we can convince people to do it. It’s non-GMO; it has purity. We just need farmers to champion it and explore the possibilities.” The potential for international markets might even exist, due to the non-GMO factor.

Growing canola could offer relief to farms that grow barley over and over, depleting the soil. “Canola is a good rotational crop for Delta but as of now there is no market,” Zhang said.

Processing the crop, which would require special equipment to crush the seeds, presents a bottleneck for growers, as is often the case in Alaska. “It will require a good investment to set up.”

Zhang recalled traveling through Canada and viewing beautiful yellow fields of canola. “I would love to see huge canola fields in Alaska too,” he said.



Left: Professor Mingchu Zhang checks canola in variety trial plots at the Fairbanks Experiment Farm. (Photo by Nancy Tarnai); Right: Canola growing at the Fairbanks Experiment Farm. (Photo by Bob Van Veldhuizen)