



May 1, 2015
Find us on the web at:
<http://dnr.alaska.gov/ag>

Director's Office

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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

Most years I am anxiously awaiting the arrival of spring, counting down the days until the snow starts to disappear and the geese and cranes return. This year was different as it seems Christmas was just yesterday, but yet it's already May. When I was young, my great grandpa told me that the second half of his life passed much quicker than the first - at the time it made no sense to me, perhaps now it does.

Recently, there has been much discussion on the Food Safety Modernization Act, otherwise known as FSMA. FSMA was signed into law January of 2011 and is the first major overhaul of food safety laws in over 70 years. Although the food safety authority in Alaska lies within the Department of Environmental Conservation, the Division of Agriculture has been following this law because of its potential impact to Alaskan farmers. As with most topics found on the Internet, there is current information, outdated information, and misinformation. It is important that those interested or even concerned about FSMA have accurate and current information on the law. This law has been in the "works" since 2009 and saw substantial changes between its initial inception to when it was signed into law in early 2011. The "Tester-Hagen Amendment" addressed some concerns prior to it becoming law, and since that time seven rules, subject to public comment, have been proposed. The agriculture industry and associated groups submitted thousands and thousands of comments. Due to the response, some of the proposed rules were changed and put out for comment again as "supplementary proposed rules". That being said, there is an overwhelming amount of information available on the Internet. The Final Rules on Preventive Controls and Produce Safety are scheduled to be finalized in August and October of 2015.

At the last Board of Agriculture meeting held on April 23rd, an overview on two of the proposed rules was presented to the board. Barb Hanson, a Division of Agriculture Inspector, prepared and presented a PowerPoint which covered the proposed rules, requirements, and qualified exemptions as currently written. The PowerPoint can be found on the Division of Agriculture website under Inspection Services, Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) as well as <http://dnr.alaska.gov/ag/Inspection/FSMAPowerpointApril2015.pdf>. Whether you support or oppose FSMA, it is important to know your facts to defend your stand. If you have any questions regarding FSMA, please give us a call.

As always, there is lot information included in this month's newsletter. Please take the time to read through it and check the calendar for upcoming events.

If you have any questions or concerns please send me an email at Franci.havemeister@alaska.gov or give me a call at 761-3867.

~ Franci

"The first day of spring is one thing, and the first spring day is another. The difference between them is sometimes as great as a month."

~ Henry Van Dyke.



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http://dnr.alaska.gov/ag/ag_arlf.htm

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Agriculture Calendar

• Sat. May 16

Farmland Palooza 501 S. Inner Springer Loop. Palmer.
1-5 pm. *Details:* [here](#)

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

Marketing Section

Alaska Agriculture Day is May 5th!

This day was established as a day to celebrate and appreciate Alaska Agriculture.

Here at the Division of Agriculture we will be visiting classrooms and collecting your stories so we can share your efforts state-wide. Tell us all about what you are doing for Alaska Agriculture Day and you will be entered into a drawing for a chance to win an Alaska Grown prize.

If you are planning an activity at any time during the week of May 4th you are eligible to submit the activity at: <https://www.research.net/r/AKAGDay>

Leave your contact information if you want to be entered into a drawing for some great Alaska Grown prizes.

There are many ways you can participate in Alaska Agriculture Day. Here are some ways you can get involved:

- Contact your local agriculture groups/chapters (Such as FFA, Farm Bureau, Agriculture in the Classroom etc.) to see if they are hosting an event in your area.
- Visit a local farm or farmers market.
- Sign up for a CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) at a local farm.
- Buy Alaska Grown and incorporate it into your meals.
- If you are a farmer, consider asking a local school if you could come into the classroom and talk about your operation and Alaska Agriculture to the students. What you do is unique and people want to know your story.
- Check out the Farm to School website for some low costs activities you can do with your students: <http://dnr.alaska.gov/ag/FarmToSchool>
- Most important: **Thank a Farmer near you!**

To find a farm near you, view the Alaska Grown Source Book at:
<http://dnr.alaska.gov/ag/sourcebook/sourcebookindex2014.html>



STATE OF ALASKA



Executive Proclamation by Governor Bill Walker

WHEREAS, agriculture has been a foundation of America's economy and social structure for more than 200 years, and today's farmers continue to play a major role in the economic development of our natural resources. Alaska's farmers and processors provide locally-produced, safe, healthy, high quality products; and

WHEREAS, from the Matanuska Colony of the 1930s, and the Northern Region farm projects of the 1980s, to thousands of acres of active farms today, farmers and livestock producers have been at the forefront of frontier expansion in Alaska; and

WHEREAS, today, Alaska's agricultural industry is an important part of the state's economy. Alaska's farmers, ranchers, fisherman, and gardeners produce exceptional products, offering Alaskans an abundant array of local food options and commercial agricultural products. In addition, those who supply the specialized equipment and seeds, and those who transport, process, and market these products play an important role. All of these links must be strong if our agricultural system is to be successful in contributing to the economic development in Alaska; and

WHEREAS, with increased consumer interest in purchasing local foods, demand for Alaskan Grown products has multiplied. Higher demand can spur expansion in production, adding to Alaska's economy and food security; and

WHEREAS, as agriculture provides many products we eat, use, and wear on a daily basis, Alaska Agriculture Day provides us with an opportunity to recognize and celebrate the important contributions of agricultural workers across our great state.

NOW THEREFORE, I, Bill Walker, GOVERNOR OF THE STATE OF ALASKA, do hereby proclaim
May 5, 2015 as:

Alaska Agriculture Day

in Alaska, and encourage all Alaskans to learn how food and fiber products are produced, to recognize the essential role of agriculture in maintaining a strong economy, and to support Alaska's farmers and producers by shopping for Alaska Grown foods and products.

Dated: April 23, 2015



Bill Walker
Bill Walker, Governor
who has also authorized the
seal of the State of Alaska to
be affixed to this proclamation.

Land Sales & Grazing Leases

http://dnr.alaska.gov/ag/ag_sales.htm

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Erik Johnson 907-761-3863
Erik.Johnson@alaska.gov

Tell us all about what you are doing for Alaska Agriculture Day for a chance to win an Alaska Grown prize.

If you are planning an activity at any time during the week of May 4th you are eligible to submit the activity at:

<https://www.research.net/r/AKAGDay>

Leave your contact information if you want to be entered into a drawing for some great Alaska Grown prizes.

FARMLAND-PALOOZA

SAVE the DATE

Saturday, May 16, 2015
1-5 p.m.

501 S. Inner Springer Loop
Palmer, AK 99645

An official dedication for the preservation of Alaska State Fair's Hamilton Field to be Farmland Forever!

- **FREE** Alaska Grown Food provided by BISTRO Red Beet
- **FREE** music performances by Mountain Waxwing, Carhart Brothers, and the C-Note Band

Presented by:

Alaska State Fair, Inc. Alaska Farmland Trust, BISTRO Red Beet, Craig Taylor, and the Mat-Su Farm Bureau

NOTICE!

The Plant Materials Center's Potato Production Program has recently undergone reconstruction.

Any questions or orders should now be directed to

Brianne.Blackburn@alaska.gov

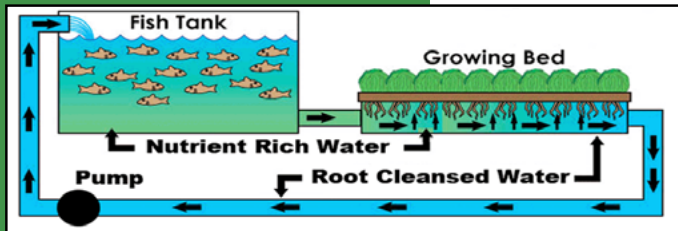
or by calling 907-745-4469.

We apologize for any inconvenience.

Pest Detection / Inspection Section

Considering an Aquaponics System?

Aquaponics is a food production system that links hydroponic crop production with aquaculture (fish farming). Unlike open-water aquaculture, aquaponics generally operates on land, and results in production of a food crop. Aquaponics is not a new concept; crops and fish have been grown together for many centuries. However, aquaponics systems are becoming very popular due to their efficiency, high productivity, and minimal impact to the environment.



Aquaponics takes advantage of the fact that plants can thrive in the nutrient-rich water from fish ponds. Plants and associated microbes convert byproducts such as ammonia and CO₂ to beneficial products such as nitrate and oxygen, in a semi-closed system.

There are both freshwater and saltwater aquaponics systems. Some are more advanced than others, incorporating various types of pumps and filters to recirculate water and optimize conditions, and to maximize water recycling. In most systems, plants are either grown in beds on soilless growing media such as that used in hydroponics, or on floating "rafts" above the water. In a manner that allows it to be certified, check with the organic certification agency prior to constructing the system.

Important: Be sure to consult with a food safety professional to ensure that your aquaponics or hydroponics system is designed, constructed, and operated in a manner that will minimize food safety hazards!

BE AWARE – Aquaponics is regulated in Alaska

To read more visit:

http://dnr.alaska.gov/ag/FactSheets/2015FactSheet_Aquaponics.pdf

or contact:

Alaska Division of Agriculture

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Palmer, AK 99645

(907) 745-7200

www.dnr.alaska.gov/ag/

Alaska Department of Fish & Game

1255 W 8th St.

Juneau, AK 99802

(907) 465-4100

<http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/>

Inspection Staff

http://dnr.alaska.gov/ag/ag_is.htm

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Mt. McKinley Meat & Sausage

http://dnr.alaska.gov/ag/ag_mmms.htm

Frank Huffman 907-745-5232

Frank.Huffman@alaska.gov

The **2015 Seed Potato Certification Application** is now available online at the Alaska Division of Agriculture website:

http://dnr.alaska.gov/ag/ag_is.htm

APPLICATION DEADLINE IS JUNE 15, 2015



Plant Materials Center

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

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Plant Materials Center (PMC)

Raised Bed Gardening in Alaska

Alaska's climate and geographical diversity create many challenges for the home gardener. Cold soils, excessive or inadequate rainfall and poor soil conditions are among the more challenging aspects of gardening in many areas. Raised-bed gardening can help overcome the problems of wet, cold, and poorly drained soils. Gardeners who do not have a garden spot located in a south-sloping, well-drained, sunny area can use raised beds with productive results.



Benefits of raised beds:

- Plant growth is enhanced through soil warming, which results from an increased drainage capability and an increase in the exposure of the soil surface to the direct rays of the sun.
- Productive growing areas can be developed in locations where conventional gardening techniques are not possible. Raised beds reduce the effort and back bending involved in planting, weeding, and harvesting.
- Many raised beds are intensively managed and therefore have high production rates per square foot.

Before you build raised beds, either mounded or framed, have the soil tested to determine what fertilizer and liming additives are needed. The soil test will help you determine the amount of lime required to raise the soil pH and the type and amount of fertilizer needed for sustained plant growth.

Materials are usually added to increase the soil fertility or air exchange and water drainage characteristics of the soil. Some materials used are sand, compost, manure, and peat moss. Use a rototiller or spade to mix the lime, fertilizers, and other materials into the soil.

For more information on how to construct raised garden beds visit:

<http://www.uaf.edu/files/ces/publications-db/catalog/anr/HGA-00132.pdf>

Article compliments of University of Alaska Fairbanks, Cooperative Extension Service.

Profiles in Small-Scale Processing: Blue Ridge Meats

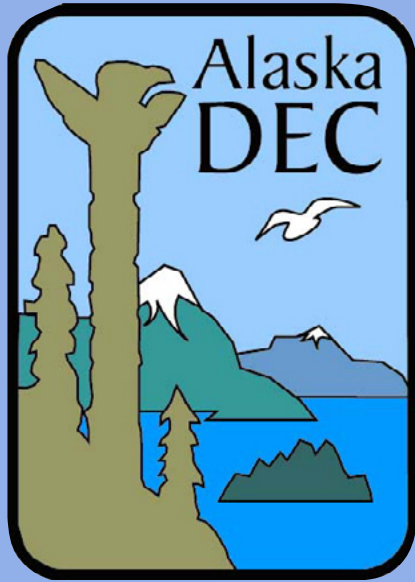
FREE WEBINAR presented by the Niche Meat Processor Assistance Network

Date: May 28, 2015

Time: 11 am PST / 2 pm EST for one hour

Go to <https://connect.extension.iastate.edu/nichemeat>
5-10 minutes before start time and log in as a guest.

Get a "behind the scenes" peek at a small, USDA-inspected slaughter and processing facility in Front Royal, VA. The owners will describe how they manage day to day operations, getting and keeping customers, bookkeeping, employee management, and more. There will be a discussion of some of the initial challenges that were encountered building the facility.



Environmental Health

Alaska Department of
Environmental Conservation

Dec.Alaska.gov/eh/
907-269-7501

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Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation: Division of Environmental Health

Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza Outbreaks

Since December 2014, the USDA has confirmed cases of highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) H5 in the Pacific, Central, and Mississippi flyways (migratory paths for birds). The disease has been found in wild birds, as well as in some backyard and commercial poultry flocks.

A fact sheet was developed to address some of the most commonly asked questions the document is posted on our web page: <http://dec.alaska.gov/eh/vet/index.htm>

The AI virus is spreading rapidly in the domestic poultry farms, with Minnesota (1.8 million turkeys) and Iowa (over 5 million laying hens) most severely affected. But there are infected farms in several other states. Wild birds have been identified with the highly pathogenic AI virus in Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Oregon, Utah, California, Missouri, New Mexico, Nevada, Kansas, and Wyoming as well as British Columbia, Canada. The USDA has quite a bit of general information on AI on their web page: http://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/usda/usdahome?contentidonly=true&contentid=avian_influenza.html. You may also find a link listing the current areas affected on this page.

Alaska wildlife biologist from both federal and state agencies are working together to perform surveillance testing. They are focusing on sampling birds involved in morbidity and mortality events now, but will be sampling healthy wild waterfowl populations later in the year. The Office of the State Veterinarian is coordinating the surveillance for domestic poultry and captive bird populations (zoos, exhibits, wild bird rehabilitation centers). It is important to note that all testing conducted since the original concern for AI (H5N1) arriving in Alaska from Asia in 2005, that HPAI was found in Alaska. This year we are anticipating that the virus may enter the state with the return of the migratory water fowl.

If HPAI is found in Alaska, the state has a response plan that involves a collaboration among state and federal animal health, wildlife health and public health agencies. There will be public announcements so that we can keep everyone informed. It is important to remember that the food supply is safe because the U.S. has an extensive surveillance program that enables early detection and response. In addition, no human infections have been identified and the CDC considers these HPAI viruses have a very low risk to human health.

It is important that poultry owners in Alaska follow good biosecurity for their birds and prevent contact with wild birds and the wetlands or waterways that wild waterfowl may access. If you do notice any sick or dead birds contact any one of the following:

- Office of the State Veterinarian at (907)-375-8215
- Alaska Department of Fish and Game at (907) 328-8354
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service at 1-866-527-3358