



October 7, 2015  
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Questions or Comments?  
E-Mail or call 907-761-3864.



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# The Division of Agriculture Activities

## Director's Note

The one thing predictable about weather in Alaska is its unpredictability. This summer brought about above average temperatures and below average rainfall in Southcentral. This fall appears to have brought below average temperatures and above average rain fall throughout most of the state. A quick look at Kodiak shows that they have been an exception - Underground Weather reports their average September rainfall as 7.35"; this September received only 1.5". To add to the anomaly, Fairbanks has already experienced their first "snow day" in the '15/'16 school year; leaving parents scrambling to cover child care and kids excited about the unscheduled day before them. As we transition to fall and head into winter, hopefully the months ahead bring more predictable weather, fewer extremes, and minimal power outages.

As always, this past September has been a busy month at the division. Last month, the PMC hosted a field day for potato producers to walk the fields and take a look at the 9,500+ varieties that were planted earlier that spring. Producers were given flags and had the opportunity to mark varieties that were of personal interest. We were pleased to have Bill Campbell join us for the event and appreciated his input.



Two new federal rules were recently released. On September 28, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) announced its final revisions to the Agricultural Worker Protection Standard (WPS) and released a [prepublication copy](#) of the final rule, which is expected to be published in the Federal Register within the next couple weeks. The EPA also released a [side-by-side comparison](#) of the new provisions compared with the current regulations. The final rule will become effective 60 days after the publication date, and EPA announced a one to two year phase in period.

On September 17, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) released the first two finalized rules of the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA); Preventive Controls for Human Food and the Preventive Controls for Animal Food. To learn more about FSMA visit the [FDA/FSMA website](#). The FDA has also published the following fact sheets: [Preventive Controls for Human Food](#) and [Preventive Controls for Animal Food](#).

As always, if you have any questions or concerns please give me a call at 761-3867 or send me an email at [franci.havemeister@alaska.gov](mailto:franci.havemeister@alaska.gov).

~ Franci Havemeister

"Autumn is a second spring when every leaf is a flower."  
~Albert Camus

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## Agriculture Calendar

- **Wed., Oct. 14** **Matanuska Susitna Borough Agricultural Advisory Board** 4:30 pm. 350 E. Dahlia Ave., DSJ Building, Conference Room 203, Palmer. *Details:* [here](#)
- **Tue. - Thur., Oct. 27-29** **AK Invasive Species Workshop** Elizabeth Peratovich Hall, 320 W. Willoughby Ave., Juneau. *Details:* [here](#)

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

## Marketing Section



The harvest is wrapping up and we are quickly headed for some winter weather. The off season is the perfect time to plan or revamp the marketing strategy for your farm. There are multiple ways to engage customers and get them excited about the products you offer. Some farmers think advertising isn't necessary, but if people don't know you're there, how can they buy your products and find out just how amazing the products you have to offer are?

Below are some ideas that can help your marketing strategy for future seasons:

- A [website](#) is one of the best marketing strategies for any business. This is a one stop shop for customers to discover the basics about your operation, what you have to offer, and where they can purchase your products. The key to a successful website is to maintain it and keep it up to date.
- [Social media](#) is a great way to interact with your customers. People want to know their farmers, so help them by having a Facebook account or a Twitter account. The key to successful social media is having a posting strategy. If you can only post once or twice a week, that's fine! Show off what you do by posting pictures of you feeding the cows or weeding the garden. This may seem mundane to you, but many people have never experienced life on a farm, so your everyday lives are exciting to them.
- Get a [local newspaper](#) to do an article about your farm. Many newspapers welcome suggestions for articles from people. If you have an idea for a story, or your farm does something unique that you want to share with the community, talk to your local newspaper about doing an article on your farm.
- [Know your audience](#). Who are your main clientele? If it's customers feeding their families, focus your strategy on showing how your nutritious your food is. If it's restaurants, focus on informing them of the products you have and its seasonal availability.
- [Sign up](#) with the [2016-2017 Alaska Grown Source Book](#). This is the most comprehensive list of Farmers in Alaska. If you are looking to expand your business or simply letting people know you are there, the Alaska Grown Source Book is the best place to advertise your business. You can sign up at <https://www.research.net/r/AKGSB16-17>.

These are just a few suggestions for enhancing your marketing strategy. For more great tips, "Marketing Strategies for Agritourism Operations" created by the University of California Agriculture and Natural Resources department is a great resource. It can be found at <http://cesonoma.ucanr.edu/files/213988.pdf>.

# FARM TO SCHOOL UPDATE



## NATIONAL **October is** FARM TO SCHOOL MONTH

Farm to School month is a time to recognize the importance of farm to school programs as a means to improve child nutrition, support local economies and educate children about the origins of food. Farm to school enriches the connection communities have with fresh, healthy food and local food producers by changing food purchasing and education practices at schools and preschools. Students gain access to healthy, local foods as well as education opportunities such as school gardens, cooking lessons and farm field trips.

Over the past decade, the farm to school movement has exploded across the United States, reaching millions of students in all 50 states and Washington, D.C. In addition to improving child health, when schools buy local, they create new markets for local and regional farmers and contribute to vibrant communities, a win-win-win scenario.

*Whether you are a food service professional, a farmer, a teacher or a food-loving family, there are plenty of ways to celebrate and get involved!*



- Hold a special day or event that features a food producer or local chef and talk with students and faculty about local food.
- Invite a food producer, local chef, or expert from the community to come talk to your class about the food system.
- Assign a class project to search the media for news related to Farm to School.
- Host a taste test with local product to see what is the most popular.
- Participate in a Local Lunch Day at the school if they offer one.

We are excited to partner with National Farm to School Network this year to hold an extra prize drawing for any Alaska projects that submit their information to the National Farm to School Month activities. To participate in the national effort go to: [farmtoschool.org](http://farmtoschool.org) and they will be promoting the sweepstakes on their homepage, so it should be easy to find. We will be giving away Alaska Grown aprons, 'Square Food Gardening with Kids' books, and Root View activity kits.

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](mailto:Johanna.herron@alaska.gov) or (907) 761-3870.





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## Pest Detection / Inspection Section

### The Potato & Carrot Packing Season Has Begun!

*Here are a few reminders when grading your Alaska Grown*

*U.S. No. 1 potatoes and carrots!*

#### Potatoes:

U.S. No. 1 allowances for some commonly seen external defects on potatoes.

Potato defect	U.S. No. 1 (see picture below)
Air crack	1/3 length or diameter in aggregate or 5% waste cut <sup>1</sup>
Bruises	5% of the surface area in aggregate or 5% waste cut <sup>1</sup>
Sunburn	5% waste cut <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Loss exceeding 5% of the total weight of the potato

**U.S. No. 1 maximum air cracks allowed.**



\*Equal amount or less allowed on the opposite side

#### Carrots:

Carrots must be "Fairly Well Formed" in order to meet the U.S. No. 1 shape requirements. Fairly well formed is defined as that the carrot is not forked or misshapen to the extent that the appearance is materially affected. Carrot Size on a U.S. No. 1 grade requires the diameter of each carrot to be not less than ¾ inch or more than 1½ inches and length not less than 5 inches.



Fairly well formed - Not lower limit

U.S. No. 1



Fairly well formed - Lower limit

U.S. No. 1

## New Faces

The Division of Agriculture would like to introduce two new employees.

**Christine Macknicki** joins the PMC as a Natural Resource Technician for the potato program. She is a long-time resident of Palmer and brings twenty years of laboratory experience in chemistry and virology with her. She is sure to be a great asset to the team.

**David Driscoll** joins the Division as the Manager of Marketing, Agricultural Land Sales, and Inspection Services and previously worked with the Division of Mining, Land and Water and brings extensive management experience to the Division.

*Join us in welcoming them both.*

## Plant Materials Center

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

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## Plant Materials Center (PMC)



### UAF Launches Alaska Weed Identification Mobile Application!

Concern about invasive species in Alaska is a growing concern, attracting attention from land managers, politicians and the public. Nearly half the new discoveries of invasive plants, animals, and insects in the state are reported by concerned individuals with a general interest in invasive species. The development of a mobile application for invasive plant identification and reporting will help enable the public to gather and share new invasive plant discoveries. This project will result in the development of a decision tool for identifying non-natives plant species, which will provide the foundation for the application. Project staff will also review user-submitted requests for identification assistance, review app-generated reports of invasives, and when necessary, alert appropriate land and resource decision makers and submit the information to the Alaska Exotic Plants Information Clearinghouse (AKEPIC).

The phone application was developed by University of Alaska Fairbanks, Cooperative Extension Service, and the University of Georgia, Center for Invasive Species and Ecosystem Health. The Western Alaska Landscape Conservation Cooperative Supported the creation of the Alaska Weeds App utilizing funding from the U.S. Geological Survey and U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service.

The Android version is available in the google store and the IOS version is available in the apple store and can be found by searching [Alaska Weed ID](#). Both versions are free. When you use the app, please provide us feedback, found in the "More Options" section.



Registration is now available for the Alaska Invasive Species Workshop.

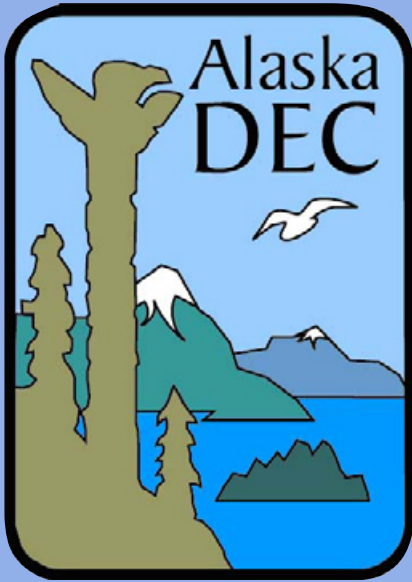
Early registration is available till October 16th.

Visit our workshop page to register.

<http://www.uaf.edu/ces/pests/cnipm/annual-invasive-species-c/>







## Environmental Health

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# Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation: Division of Environmental Health

## Preparing livestock for winter

During your fall handling of your herd of cattle try to pay attention to low-stress handling methods. Stress, especially during the cold and wet season, is associated with an increase in respiratory disease. Also monitor cattle closely for any signs of lameness. Fall is a very common time for foot rot and interdigital dermatitis. These infections can extend deep into the tissues and joints causing severe lameness so early treatment is important to avoid long term problems. Check your herd health plan with your veterinarian about worming the herd and pregnancy testing cows. It is very expensive to feed an open cow all winter.

It is a good time to evaluate and sort cows into winter feeding groups. For younger stock you can use supplements (trace minerals, protein blocks) and consider other products (Bovatec, Gainpro or Rumesin) that may improve feed conversion and weight gain. Proper use of these types of products can increase feed efficiency giving you upwards of a 10% or more increase in growth performance. Cows can be grouped according to stage of production and/or body condition score (BCS). Cows in thin body condition will require closer attention and additional supplementation to make sure they are in a BCS 5 to 6 by calving. Heifers should be fed to achieve about 60% of mature weight by breeding so they are in good condition for calving time.

When you evaluate your feeding management for the long winter you may consider a forage test to determine nutrient value of your hay. This can help determine the need for any additional supplementation.

