

April 2008



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The Windssock

2008 PEST FORECAST

“The population numbers gathered last season help us determine what the pressures and risks might present during the 2008 crop season.” says Scott Meers, insect management specialist with Alberta Agriculture and Food, Brooks.

This area-specific information will help producers plan and budget for control options should they be needed. While the economics of crops dictate decisions, this advance forecast information gives producers some advance warning of what management options may be needed.

The forecast information is also valuable for seed companies and herbicide companies that provide control options. These companies can use this information to ensure availability of products and specific seed varieties. Of the pests that were closely monitored during 2007, there are six which are of particular interest and concern to producers.

“The pest that really stands out is the **wheat midge**,” says Meers. “A fall survey which counted larvae in soil samples showed numbers much higher than numbers seen before in the province. These numbers indicate that Alberta may be at significant risk of midge infestation in 2008. The survey covered all wheat growing areas in central Alberta, down to High River and along highway #2. Wheat midge were found in significant numbers

from Three Hills to Westlock, and east of Edmonton to the Saskatchewan border.”

Wheat stem sawfly numbers were down considerably, based on the level of sawfly ‘cutting’ reported in 2007. Pockets of higher populations are still holding on in the Special Areas around Oyen, and in areas between Foremost and Bow Island. This pest is of most concern in the drier wheat growing areas.

“**Pea leaf weevil** numbers were way up in 2007 surveys,” says Meers. “While not a true forecast, the map for this pest gives an indication of what producers can expect. Survey results and experience have shown that if there is severe to very high levels of pea leaf weevil in an area in a given year, then control options need to be considered in those areas the next year.”

Cabbage seedpod weevil numbers were way up in 2007 and, again from experience, high populations during a given year tend to indicate what can be expected the next year. “The cabbage seedpod weevil doesn’t do well in extreme hot conditions, such as were experienced last year,” says Meers. “While there were higher numbers of the weevil, the hot dry summer may have helped, and producers could see population numbers decrease in 2008. However, canola growers south of highway #1 will still need to watch

for this pest by scouting their fields as canola comes into flower.”

Bertha armyworm was not as big a problem as anticipated in 2007. While it looked as though a problem was building, the numbers were not as high as projected and this pest caused very few economic problems. A summer survey, being planned for June and July 2008, will be undertaken. Once the survey is done, a more accurate forecast will be available. “It just may be that the bertha armyworm infestation has run its course,” says Meers.

A forecast map for **grasshoppers** will be posted very soon. Producers throughout Alberta should note; however, that grasshoppers made a significant resurgence and were a problem in many areas last year. Grasshoppers thrive in heat, and there was lots of heat in 2007.

“When it comes to forecasting for insect pests, weather is a huge driver – especially in grasshoppers,” says Meers. “If the province experiences good rainfall in late May and early June, grasshopper hatchlings could be drowned, dramatically reducing a threat for the 2008 growing season. Also, natural enemies, the parasites and diseases that kill crop pest can have a very beneficial effect on the populations. Producers need to be watchful and aware of the conditions in their area and in their own fields.”

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

BY TOM KINNIBURGH

It is the end of March and we are off to the races. I was driving to work today and I passed a couple of tractors working in the field already. Some local farmers also have some seed in the ground. It appears we are going to have an early season in the southern part of Alberta. Moisture levels are all over the place. Some areas say we have normal or above others say it is dry but most think that this season has potential to be a great one.

Shortage seems to be an issue in all sectors of aviation, pilots, aircraft, as well as AME's. Don't take this as preaching BUT don't let this affect safety. Expect a lot out of your pilots but not miracles as well don't wait till the last minute to book maintenance because odds are your AME will be booked up. Try to give a day or two notices so they can get the work done and done safely.

It seems that we may also run into a shortage of crop protection products this year. That may sound like a bad thing but odds are that we will apply large chunk of that product. We are recommending to growers who don't already do so. That they should pre buy all there product that they feel they will need because if they decide at the last minute it could be too late.

I hope that everyone gets a chance to kick back relax and watch the Calgary Flames in the playoffs. Have a safe and productive season.

Economic Impact

- Alberta is the second largest agricultural producer in Canada. There are 53,000 farms in Alberta that account for 23% of national farm cash receipts generated from primary agriculture.
- Alberta exported \$5.1 billion of primary and processed agri-food products in 2002 to over 100 countries around the world. Just over 59% or 3.0 billion of all agri-food exports went to the United States. Japan was the next largest export market at \$745 million.
- Alberta is a Canadian crop leader, producing 46% of Canada's barley, 34% of Canada's canola, 30% of the country's wheat, 23% of Canada's honey, and 100% of the nation's sugar beets.

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If you are interested in this service, please contact the CAAA office at 780-413-0078.

Why is Agriculture in Alberta Changing?

“Sustainable agriculture must be ecologically sound, economically viable and socially responsible.”

The future of agriculture as we know it

At least 90 million people are added to the world population annually. With this growth in population, the agriculture industry is becoming less able to meet the world wide demands for food. The challenge for the agriculture community is to develop policies and attitudes that help them respond positively to these changing markets and conditions, while remaining competitive, profitable and sustainable.

Why do traditional farming practices have to change to meet the increasing demand for food?

Because yields in many traditional farming systems are low, pressure to clear new land for farming continues to increase. Due to pressures of increasing populations and the migration and cultivation of inappropriate lands, traditional agriculture is now a major contributor to environmental degradation in third-world, developing countries. Farming on a small scale, as many of us are used to, is no longer the most productive way of agriculture.

What factors are driving the change in agriculture as we know it?

There are many reasons today’s producers must look at farming as a business, and try to make decisions that allow their operations to be ecologically sound, economically viable and socially responsible.

- Society is evolving, and producers (farmers and ranchers) must address the changing needs of consumers. As their customers continue to demand nutritious, safe food that is easy to prepare, producers must look at expanding their operations, specializing in one commodity or developing value-added products to meet consumer expectations.
- Now more than ever, farming relies on science, technology and research. Producers must keep up to date with new opportunities, and hire employees with a high level of management skill and technological experience. These opportunities have given thousands of Albertans jobs.

Are we seeing the end of the family farm?

While some farms in Alberta have expanded, merged or grown to be more economically viable, many agriculture operations remain family-run businesses. It is a way of life and a business that will continue to be important for many Alberta families for years to come. However, the need to be more specialized and productive has created a decline in “mixed farms” and “hobby farms” throughout the province. Larger operations can lead to reduced costs and more efficient service. Farming is more than a business – it’s about building Canada’s future.



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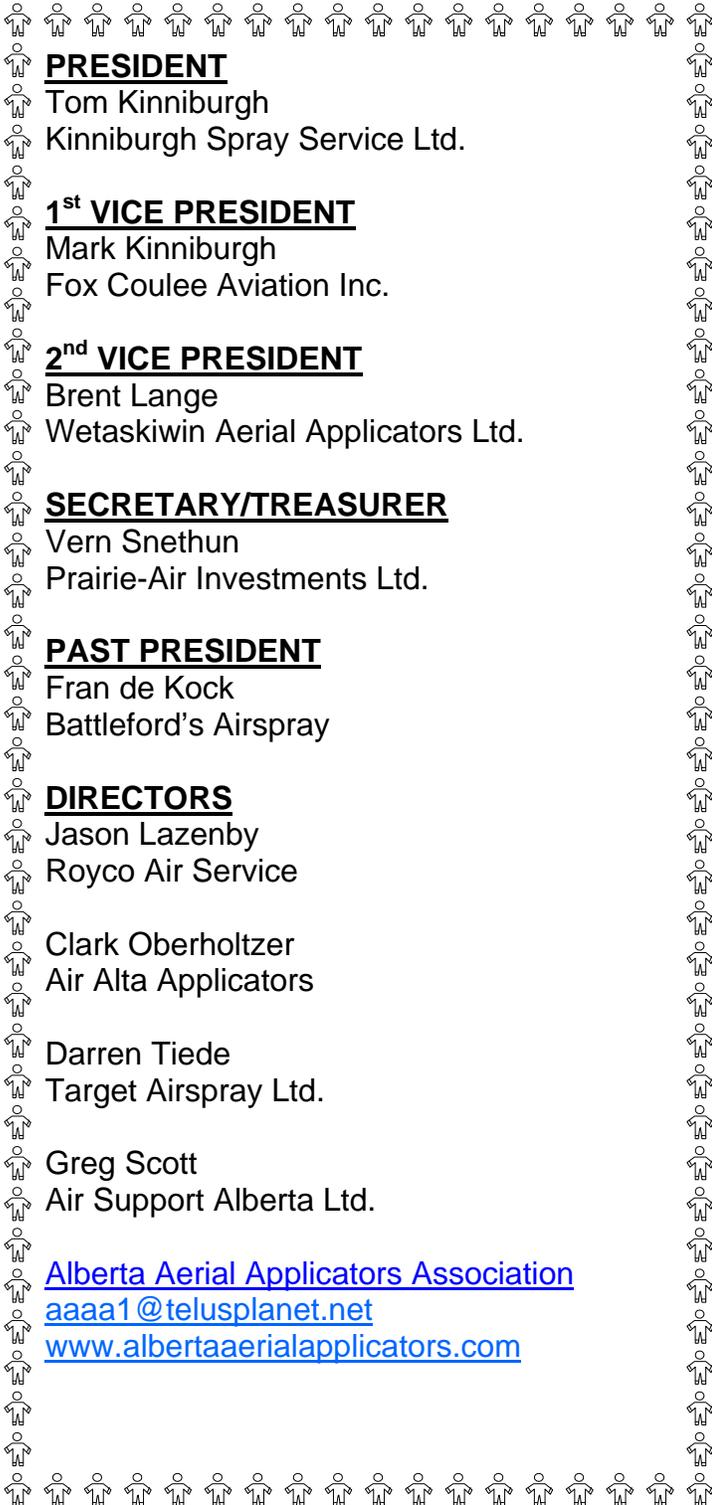
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Thank You Sponsors

The 2007 Alberta Aerial Applicators Association (AAAA) Annual General Meeting & Conference was held at the Red Deer Lodge in November.

The AAAA would like to acknowledge the generous support of these companies through their sponsorship of the conference. Their support was a major assistance in making the 37th Annual General Meeting a successful event.

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