The Division of Agriculture Activities

September 01, 2011

Find us on the web at:
http://dnr.alaska.gov/ag

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Questions or Comments?
E-Mail or call 907-761-3864.

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Directors Note

Once again, September is just around the corner. The leaves are beginning to turn in the Mat-Su, the Alaska State Fair is in full swing, and producers around the state are watching the weather with an anxious eye. Hopefully Mother Nature cooperates this year and we have another long Indian summer and a bountiful harvest.

The Division of Agriculture will be updating our Long Range Plan for Agriculture soon, and is requesting input from industry. I'll be attending Farm Bureau meetings throughout the state in September and October, and hope to have a draft available for review and discussion at the annual Farm Bureau meeting in Homer. The last plan can be found at dnr.alaska.gov/ag/Index/BuildingaSustainableAgricultureIndustryFINAL.pdf. Comments on the plan will be accepted through October 31st, and can be sent to Franci.Havemeister@alaska.gov.

An opportunity has come up for the Division of Agriculture, in partnership with Department of Commerce, to participate in the Alaska Media Road Show in Santa Barbara, CA on October 24th. This event showcases tourism opportunities in Alaska and the division will be promoting agri-tourism in our great state. If you are interested in exploring the possibility of agri-tourism on your farm please give me a call at 761-3867.

For those that have been following the Animal Disease Traceability issue, the USDA is now accepting comments on the proposed rule through November 9th of this year. Under the proposed rule, livestock moved interstate, unless specifically exempted, would have to be officially identified and accompanied by an interstate certificate of veterinary inspection or other documentation, such as owner-shipper statements or brand certificates. The proposed rule allows the use of low-cost technology and specifies approved official identification, such as metal ear tags for cattle. More complete information is available on the USDA's website, at usda.gov/wps/portal/usda/usdahome?contentid=2011/08/0343.xml.

Craig and Kathy Baker were honored this past week as the 2011 Farm Family of the year. The Governor and 1st Lady attended the event, with the Governor being recognized for supporting Alaska Grown at his daughter's wedding with the purchase of peonies from the interior.

Happy Labor Day,

-Franci Havemeister

"Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter."

- Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Agriculture Calendar

- Fri. October 7th, 2011, 8:00 am:
  Div. of Agriculture / Dept. of Environmental Conservation Bi-Monthly Teleconference
  Call-in number: 1-800-315-6338 (pass code: 122#)
- Thur. October 13th - Fri. 14th, 2011:
  Sustainable Livestock Conference - Sheraton Hotel, Anchorage (*details:* uaf.edu/snras/dslp)
  Contact: Janice Rowell, jerowell@alaska.edu

As we learn about new agriculture events throughout Alaska, we will add the details to the calendar. If you have an event that you would like to add, please contact Lora Haralson.

Marketing Section

How do you communicate with your customers?

Do you have a regularly occurring newsletter? Do you have a Facebook page? Do you call clients weekly to let them know of your product availability? It seems that every day our world becomes more connected, but what does this mean for you as a producer? How are you keeping up with the trends? Consider this editorial from the August edition of *The Grower*:

> "The California Agricultural Communications Coalition conducted consumer research about what messages would resonate with consumers; it turns out consumers are interested in multi-generational family farms and learning more about how their food is grown. Says Cory Lunde, a policy analyst and project manager with the Western Growers Association "If farmers can make that emotional connection, that personal connection, consumers will be more supportive of the industry."

So how are you staying connected? Do you have a family member or employee who is good with computers? Consider your options and recognize the power in connecting with your current and potential customers.

The Division of Agriculture marketing program may be able to assist you in promoting your business. Contact the Alaska Grown marketing team at 907-761-3864 with your questions or ideas.

Alaska Farm-to-School Program Update

Alaska School Garden Food Safety Guidelines

The Alaska School Garden Food Safety Guideline document has been completed, and is now available on the Division of Agriculture's website, at: dnr.alaska.gov/ag/Farm-ToSchool/SGfoodsafetyguide.pdf.

Printed copies will soon be available statewide, upon request. If you would like a copy of this document, please notify Farm-to-School coordinator Johanna Herron, at Johanna.herron@alaska.gov or (907) 374-3714. Be sure to provide your name and mailing address.

Alaska Grower's School, Youth Leadership Organizations

The Division of Agriculture's Farm-to-School program linked up with students in the Alaska Growers School to see what they are learning and discuss how we can be a resource for them. We made some great connections this month with two youth leadership organizations: Alaska for Environmental Action (AYEA) and Youth for A Healthier Alaska (YAHA). We toured the Johnson Youth Center garden in Juneau and saw all of the great produce the kids were growing.

The Farm-to-School program is on facebook: facebook.com/AlaskaFarmToSchool. Like

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Alaska Farm-to-School Program Update

Teaming up for Childhood Nutrition

The Alaska Farm to School program continues to work with state coordinators from the Department of Education and Early Development, Child Nutrition Program. We visited some processors in Anchorage to see if there were products we could develop that the schools would like and also utilize local foods.

We also attended the National School Lunch Program training in Juneau to learn more about their program. Discussion and brainstorming led to some promising ideas and a greater appreciation of each other's program goals.

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) 374-3714.

Johanna Herron, Jo Dawson, and Sue Lampert met with local processors to discuss the use of local products in school lunch programs

Did you say strawberries in Bethel?

There are some beautiful strawberries growing in Bethel, in spite of a rainy and cold summer. The Alaska Farm-to-School program headed to Bethel for a rural School/Farm tour and to talk about opportunities with Food Service Director Marlis Fox.

The Lower Kuskokwim School District serves 22 villages, as well as 5 schools in Bethel. We ate lunch with students at Ayaprun Elitnaurvik Elementary School and then headed to the kitchen to see what the school cook was working on.

Shaundy Davis, the school's head cook, is excited to try recipes that make use of new equipment recently installed. Her kitchen provides for over 600 students in Bethel and everyone is thrilled to have her there!

New equipment in the Bethel school kitchen means additional capacity for using local produce

Delicious, locally grown strawberries in Bethel

After brainstorming some recipe ideas, we headed over to a nearby farm to see what was growing.

Meyer farm is growing some food which may be of interest to the school district. They also have a lot of storage room in their root cellar. Tour participants pondered ways to use that space, and plan to work together further.

Locally grown Green Onion, Lettuce, and Kohlrabi are available in Bethel.

Land Sales & Grazing Leases

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

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Inspection Section

Help Keep Alaska Free of a Potentially Devastating Tree Disease

Alaskan growers are asked to keep a watchful eye on imported plants. *Phytophthora ramorum,* the pathogen behind Sudden Oak Death is causing concern in Alaska and the entire United States. Even though Oak is not native to Alaska, this disease may hitch a ride via imported trees or ornamental shrubs, such as Rhododendron or Viburnum. Many of our native trees and shrubs would be susceptible to infection, including larch, highbush cranberry and alder.

Phytophora ramorum on a Rhododendrom leaf

Phytophthora ramorum (P. *ramorum*) is a water mold pathogen that causes Sudden Oak Death (SOD). It is also the cause of the Ramorum Leaf Blight, Ramorum Dieback and Phytophthora Canker Diseases.

P. *ramorum* thrives in cool, wet climates. Significant infections can also occur in plant nurseries that produce plants for these climate conditions. It can spread through wind-blown rain, contaminated irrigation water and infected plants. Soil or potting mix may also spread the pathogen.

P. *ramorum* has a broad range of hosts, including hardwoods, softwoods, landscape plants and herbaceous plants. To date, more than 75 plant species and cultivars representing more than 45 genera can either be infected by *P. ramorum* or facilitate its spread.

Federal quarantine is currently the best way to reduce or eliminate the spread of Sudden Oak Death (*P. ramorum*). No cure exists for the disease, so controlling the spread is the only way to stop it. For information on current SOD quarantines and federal P. *ramorum* nursery regulations, visit www.aphis.usda.gov/plant_health/plant_pest_info/pram/.

To assist in the prevention of this serious pathogen, the State of Alaska, Division of Agriculture, is maintaining a list of host plants which are shipped to Alaskan nurseries from nurseries located in the lower 48. This will provide back-tracing capabilities if *P. ramorum* is detected in our plants. There is no known cure for this disease, so the best prevention is buying plants from approved and tested nurseries, and only accepting plants that are in good condition with no obvious signs of disease.

Tonoak forest with P. ramorum infection

If you have plants in your nursery which show signs of *P. ramorum*, please contact Leo Kazeck at the Division of Agriculture: Leo.Kazeck@alaska.gov or 907-631-1078.

Public Notices

Sustainable Livestock Production in Alaska: Conference & Workshop:

Sheraton Anchorage Hotel, October 13-14, 2011

The Cooperative Extension Service & UAF School of Natural Resources & Agricultural Sciences are hosting a USDA sponsored conference/workshop at the Sheraton Anchorage Hotel. This workshop will bring together Alaska livestock producers, marketing professionals and policy makers to:

- Identify best practices that work; from the production of healthy meat to ecosystem health
- Identify barriers to sustainable red meat production
- Identify collaborative ways to support sustainable agriculture; research, education & extension

Please register early; space constraints limit participation to 100 people. For more information, go to uaf.edu/snras/dslp. Please also extend the invitation to your colleagues and associates. Livestock industry input will influence the way we design research, education and extension programs for sustainability and food security. Questions? Contact Janice Rowell, at jerowell@alaska.edu.

Plant Materials Center

http://plants.alaska.gov/

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Plant Materials Center

PMC Fall Seed Sale runs September 9th - 23rd

Native seeds play an important role in restoring damaged landscapes and as items of horticulture. In order to meet standards of environmental quality, both public and private agencies are required to revegetate with native plants. The Plant Materials Center (PMC) receives many calls each summer, from individuals seeking a diverse selection of native plant seed.

Individuals seeking to purchase seeds of Sweetvetch, Hairgrass, Wormwood, Beach Wildrye, Slender Wheatgrass, and others are directed to the PMC's Native Plant Source Directory, located at plants.alaska.gov/native/.

In-state growers of native Alaskan plant seeds have increased over the past few years, but they still are unable to meet the needs of the multitude of agencies needing high quantities of seed. For those who already grow or who want to grow native seed, the PMC will be offering different types of high quality, tested, native plant seed for sale; including grasses, grains, and forbs.

The Fall Seed Sale runs from September 9 through September 23. Your order can be placed directly from the PMC website, at plants.alaska.gov/seedsale/. Orders can also be sent to Peggy Hunt at the address below:

Alaska Plant Materials Center
5310 Bodenburg Spur Rd.
Palmer, Alaska 99645
Phone: 907-745-8721
Fax: 907-745-7242
peggy.hunt@alaska.gov

Orders will be allocated after September 23. Payment is expected at pick up.

Fourteen different species of forbs are being offered for sale. All of these varieties grow best if they are planted in the fall and allowed to remain in the outside soil for our winter's freezes and thaws. Planting these seeds now will produce healthy plants next summer, and vigorous, seed producing plants in 2013.

Agencies require many thousands of each different species of plant. A ready market for native seed exists. Take the time now to plant for the future. Individuals and agencies need large quantities of seed annually, and this represents a large potential revenue stream for growers of native Alaskan seeds.

Seed sold by the PMC (either "Foundation Seed" or "Selected Class Release") undergoes rigorous conditioning and testing before it is sold. Each seed lot has been tested for purity, noxious weed seeds, and viability (germination) through the PMC's certified Seed Laboratory. The PMC offers for sale only seed that has been evaluated for vigor and hardiness in Alaska. These plants are adapted to our long, dark, cold winters and the long sunny days of the summer.

Information about each plant can be found online, at plants.alaska.gov/publications/plant-flyers.php. Seeds can either be grown in cultivated fields or raised beds, depending on your land and available equipment. It is much easier to harvest these seeds from your own cultivated crops than to collect them in bits and pieces from the wild. Check the flyers to see if the seed you plan to grow requires certain types of soil; so you can plant for optimum harvest.

The opportunity to purchase the seeds from the PMC happens only during September and April. Fall is the best time to order and plant forbs. The seed available now will also be available for purchase in April – but if you intend to plant before the end of May, it is advisable to order the seed now and keep it in cold storage for use in the spring.

For more information about the PMC's fall seed sale, please contact Peggy Hunt, at (907) 745-8721, or Peggy.Hunt@alaska.gov.

Plant Materials Center

Late Blight in Alaska

Late Blight is a serious fungal disease affecting tomatoes and potatoes. It can be spread by spores over large areas in a very short time. The disease is caused by the fungus Phytophthora infestans and requires a live host for reproduction. Late blight was discovered in commercial plantings in the Matanuska Valley in September of 2010, and the disease is causing further problems in 2011.

History

Late blight was found in commercial fields in 1995, and again in 1998, 2005 and 2010. In all instances, late blight had been reported in the lower 48 earlier in the growing season. It was thought that the disease had been brought in on infected plant material, and subsequently escaped to infect Alaskan fields.

The lack of detection of late blight in the years following the outbreaks, given that the weather was conducive for its growth, led us to conclude that the disease had not successfully overwintered. The data shows this hypothesis to be suspect, however.

DNA testing has shown the late blight found in Alaska in 1995 was the US 7 strain, while the 1998, 2005 and 2010 finds were typed as the US 11 strain. The most common strains of late blight found in the continental US during 2009 and 2010 were US 22, US 23 and US 24. US 11 has not been identified for several years, however. If the disease was freshly imported, the strain found here would likely be the same as those strains found outside of Alaska.

Causes

Late blight can overwinter in host plant tissue, and also as a spore which results from sexual reproduction. The Alaska Plant Materials Center has identified stored tubers as the most likely source of repeat infections.

Potato Late blight causes a characteristic discoloration of the leaf and stem of a diseased plant

Photo: Margaret T. McGrath | Cornell University

Management

Late blight requires specific environmental conditions to grow. The wind-borne spores require water on the surface of the plant, either as rain or dew, for a minimum of three hours to infect the plant. The time period from infection to new spore release can be as few as 2½ days. The quick spread of this disease can be devastating to a crop, making good management practices critical.

Alaska's cool air temperature may help slow down late blight's growth rate. Given that the strain infecting Alaskan potatoes is now somewhat rare, this supports the idea that late blight has been here since 1995, and weather conditions were not conducive for an epidemic.

Cull potatoes are considered the most likely source of renewed infection the year following field identification of Late Blight. Infected seed can also provide the source of infection. Discard any seed potatoes showing obvious rot. Once planted, infection will travel up the stem, causing brown lesions on the stem, above the soil line. The next symptom would be water soaked areas on leaves that are dark in color. Suspicious plants should be pulled and put into plastic bags for disposal, to keep spores from spreading.

Control measures include close examination of the seed to remove diseased tubers, treating seed with a fungicide, regular scouting of fields, and being prepared to apply a protectant fungicide.

The Alaska Plant Materials Center, in cooperation with uspest.org, now offers a web based tool to aid growers in monitoring for late blight. Growers can view risk models for the disease, based on real-time weather data for many locations across Alaska, at plants.alaska.gov/potato-program.

Education

The Alaska Cooperative Extension publication #PMC-00338: Late Blight Disease of Potato and Tomato in Alaska can be accessed at: www.uaf.edu/ces/publications-db/catalog/anr/PMC-00338.pdf. Detailed photos of late blight symptoms can be also be found at www.longislandhort.cornell.edu/vegpath/photos/lateblight_potato.htm.

If you have any questions or concerns about late blight, please contact the Plant Materials Center, at 745-4469, or email Bill Cambpell, at William.Campbell@alaska.gov.

Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation:

Division of Environmental Health

Pesticide Control Program Update

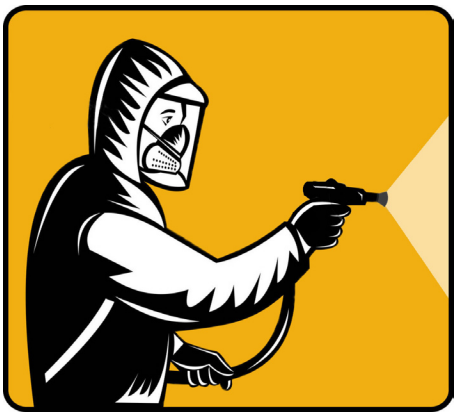
Pesticides and Regulations on Your Farm

Pesticides are an important agricultural tool. Like any chemical, however, they can be dangerous if not used properly. There are many regulations to help ensure that pesticides can be used safely. One set of regulations that many farmers are not aware of are the Worker Protection Standards, or WPS. These regulations are intended to protect employees who work at farms, greenhouses, or other agricultural areas.

If you use pesticides on your farm and you have employees who work at your farm (not including immediate family), then the WPS requirements apply to you.

Make sure you know and follow WPS – it's the law. WPS requires you to:

- provide pesticide training to employees;
- post information about pesticides that have been used;
- post emergency assistance information;
- provide personal protective equipment and decontamination supplies; and
- store pesticides in a secure, separate area with appropriate warning signs.



There are other requirements based on specific circumstances. For information or assistance in determining which requirements apply to you, please contact the Pesticide Control Program, at 907-376-1870.

You can get more information from the Pesticide Control Program website, at: dec.alaska.gov/eh/pest/.

Pesticide is applied to a potato field in the Matanuska Valley

Environmental Health

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