

CountryTalk

News for rural residents of Strathcona County

Volume 13, Issue 1 Spring 2011

Private lands public lands

Preventing private use of County lands, including municipal reserve and environmental reserves is important for Strathcona County. We wish to ensure public safety and public access, while avoiding environmental damage and maintenance and restoration costs.

The majority of landowners respect property boundaries. However, the actions of some result in a negative effect on natural vegetation, wildlife habitat, ecosystems, and access on the public land.

The County is responsible for managing our parks, reserve lands and water bodies. Lands are designated Municipal Reserve, Environmental Reserve and Conservation Easement to help manage activities on these lands and to sustain our resources.

Municipal land designations

Municipal Reserve

- Lands claimed by the County during the sub-division process specifically to be used for public park, public recreation and school authority purposes.

Environmental Reserve

- Lands claimed by the County during the sub-division process that consists of naturally occurring features such as a swamp, gully, ravine, coulee, natural drainage course, or land that is subject to flooding or is unstable. A strip of land, not less than six metres (19 feet) in width that abuts the bed and shore of any lake, river, stream or other body of water can also be claimed for the purpose of preventing pollution or providing public access.

Conservation Easement

- A legal agreement between a landowner and Strathcona County permitting the landowner to own and manage their private land with benefits to both the landowner and the environment. This ensures the landowner retains use of the land while preserving the property's conservation values and protecting the stewardship of the land in perpetuity.

There are some rules to protect Strathcona County lands. Restricted or unauthorized activities, such as constructing, storing, landscaping, erecting, placing or removing anything on, in, under or over County property without written approval by the County, is a fineable offence.

Further information

Strathcona County, Land Management Services
780-464-8144

Bats, friend or foe?

There are nine species of bats in Alberta with the most common being the Little Brown Bat. Bats are nocturnal mammals that normally feed at night. They hibernate for six to seven months in the winter and sleep in a concealed roost (e.g. attic) for up to 20 hours a day during the summer. Some characteristics about bats are completely misunderstood. In fact, they:

- are not blind
- do not get caught in people's hair
- are very clean animals
- won't chew through the attic of your house
- don't interfere with birds feeding in your yard
- will not be disrupted by pets or children

If you are having a problem with bats in your attic, barn, or buildings there are a few steps you can take to ensure your safety and cleanliness.

How to remove bats from your building

Once entry sites have been determined, the most effective means of removing bats from their roosting place is to seal off openings. Bats squeak and rustle in the roost as they crawl towards the entrance and will help pinpoint exactly where the

entrance might be. Keep in mind bats cannot chew or gnaw new holes, but can enter through holes as small as your thumb.

Once the holes/entrances are determined, seal them up keeping

one hole open. If you need to block ventilation gaps, use hardware mesh to cover it. Seal cracks with a caulking compound and holes with siding, hardware mesh or sheet metal.



Ardrossan Recreation Complex is set to take shape


The Ardrossan Recreation Complex is running as usual with *service modifications in place for 2011. Over the next couple of months the new building will begin to take shape with the installation of structured steel. The firewall between the new arena and the existing curling rink is currently being constructed.

The vision for the Complex is to become an inviting place to gather and be active. Once complete, it will offer a wellness centre with group fitness classes, an indoor track for walking and running, recreational skating and pre-school playground opportunities. A new arena is being built to replace the aging infrastructure.

*Service Modifications

Temporary entrances to the hall and arena remain in place on the west side of the building for 2011. A temporary entrance for the curling rink is also in place on the south side of the rink. Pre-school has been relocated from the upstairs meeting rooms until spring. These rooms are still available to book as meeting space.

Stay informed

 View the live webcam to see the construction progress or check out the latest construction photos and information updates online at www.strathcona.ca/revitalize.



To make a one-way exit use a plastic bread bag or something to create a sleeve with holes at both ends. Place the bread bag on the outside of the entrance. Bats inside the roost can get out through the bag, and the ones outside won't get back in.

Do not do this procedure in June, July or August as bats are raising their young and pups can't fly out of the roost. Bats that roost in the buildings during our summers tend to migrate in fall to different locations to hibernate. They return to their original roosts in early May. So if you seal holes between October 31 and May 1 you don't have to worry about trapping any bats inside.

Bat houses

Bats are a natural pest control. A single brown bat can eat up to 1,000 mosquitoes in an hour – so they are good neighbours to have. You can help by providing them a nice bat house in your yard. Just follow the step-by-step instructions on the website below to build your very own bat house.



Tips:

- Make sure your bat house is at least 12 feet or more in the air - on a tree, pole or structure.
- Put it near a body of water where the majority of bugs will be hanging around.
- Bats, especially 'pups', need a lot of heat. Face the house southeast so it can soak up as much heat from the sun as possible.

Further information

 www.strathcona.ca/tas
780-417-7100
www.srd.alberta.ca/BioDiversityStewardship/WildSpecies/Mammals/Bats/

FSC logo here

**Strathcona
County**

TRANSPORTATION &
AGRICULTURE SERVICES

Invasive plants

Not all flowers are friendly

In the summer of 2010, numerous media stories about Giant Hogweed brought attention to this invasive plant and the fact that it can cause skin irritation, blistering and burning upon contact. Concerns were raised by the local public and phone calls flooded in with sightings of Giant Hogweed. County weed inspectors investigated every report and confirmed, in all cases, that it was actually Cow Parsnip.

Cow Parsnip (*Heracleum lanatum*) is a native plant commonly found in moist ditches and streams throughout Strathcona County. It looks very similar to Giant Hogweed but is not nearly as large.



Cow Parsnip

Some key characteristics of Giant Hogweed include short hairs on the leaf undersides, purplish spots and stiff bristles on the stem.

If you think that you have spotted Giant Hogweed, do not touch the plant with bare skin. Information on the County website at www.strathcona.ca/tas will assist you in identifying this plant.

Another invasive plant of concern in our region is Garlic Mustard. It was introduced to North America from Europe and Asia possibly for its medicinal and culinary properties. Already a growing concern in surrounding municipalities, it is important that any suspected sightings be reported to Transportation and Agricultural Services.

Properties of Garlic Mustard allow the plant to quickly spread and take over native species in the undergrowth of a forest or flood plain area. The plant cannot only self-pollinate, but it releases a toxin to other native plants and trees that interferes with their growth. The plant is able to bolt early in the season giving it a growth advantage on other plants. It then goes to seed in early summer.

Rosettes resemble other plants of the Mustard family but only the leaves of Garlic Mustard release a garlic smell when crushed. Key identifying features of the plant include flower clusters with four white petals at the top of the stem and dark green rounded or heart shaped leaves with coarsely toothed edges. By late June, the plants have died leaving an upright stalk of dry, pale-brown seed pods.

For further information or to report any suspected sightings, call 780-417-7100.



Giant Hogweed



Garlic Mustard

Ornamental invasive plants

In 2010, several ornamental invasive plants were added to the noxious and prohibited noxious weed lists under the Alberta Weed Control Act. Many of the new species can be found in your flower beds or garden. These “flowers” are identified as invasive plants due to their abilities to spread rapidly, often escaping garden boundaries. They can outgrow native species resulting in an impact on natural environments. Invasive plants have the potential to cause severe agricultural losses as they can take over crops or are toxic to livestock.

Noxious weeds must be controlled to prevent the spread of seeds and prevent the plants from being established. They can be controlled by hand-pulling, mowing, cultivating or spraying them with an appropriate herbicide.

Prohibited noxious weeds must be destroyed by eradicating all growing parts of the plant or to render the reproductive mechanisms unviable. Prohibited noxious weeds can be destroyed by hand-pulling, cultivation or mowing followed by an application of an appropriate herbicide.

Dispose of prohibited noxious and noxious weeds in a manner that will prevent the spread of the weed seeds. Weeds can be placed in the organics cart for composting.

The Alberta Invasive Plant Council has information posted on their website regarding the ornamental plants that are “not so friendly”. They have also published a brochure, “Weed Wise: Gardening in Alberta” which outlines ornamental plants classified as weeds and suggests alternative plants that will have the same effect in gardens or flower beds. The brochure is available on their website.

Some of the newly identified weeds you may have in your yard include:

Prohibited noxious weeds

Himalayan Balsam

(*Impatiens glandulifera*)

- Riparian annual that reproduces by seed. When plant is disturbed seeds “explode” and can distribute up to five metres.
- Flowers are very attractive with high pollen content, drawing pollinators away from native species.
- Grows quickly and can reach up to three metres in height.



Himalayan Balsam

Salt Cedar (*Tamarix spp.*)

- Deciduous small tree that can tolerate high salt content. Salt accumulates in the plant which leads to increased soil salinity over time causing leaf litter and dead fall.
- Dense stands alter natural riparian areas by accumulating sediment that changes the natural watercourse features.
- A deep root system allows this plant to access water during periods of drought and out competes native species plants.



Salt Cedar

St. John's Wort

(*Hypericum perforatum*)

- Perennial known for herbal treatments reproduces rapidly by creeping rhizomes.
- Toxic to grazing livestock including horses, cattle and sheep.



St. John's Wort

Noxious weeds

Dame's Rocket (*Hesperis matronalis*)

- Ornamental biennial or short-lived perennial that has very fragrant flowers.
- Commonly found in wildflower mixes.



Dame's Rocket

Creeping Bellflower

(*Campanula rapunculoides*)

- Perennial that reproduces by both seed and creeping rhizomes. Root systems are able to extend under surface obstacles including sidewalks and lawns.
- Herbicide resistance makes this plant difficult to control or eradicate.
- Commonly found in wildflower mixes.



Creeping Bellflower

Yellow Clematis (*Clematis tangutica*)

- Ornamental perennial vine that reproduces both by seed and vegetatively from stem pieces.
- Vines grow extensively along the ground or climb on physical features.
- Wind easily disperses the abundant “fluffy” seeds from flower beds and gardens.



Yellow Clematis

Common Baby's Breath

(*Gypsophila paniculata*)

- A perennial commonly used in floral arrangements.
- Thousands of seeds are dispersed when dry stems break loose in the winter creating a tumbleweed effect.
- A deep root system allows this plant to access water during a drought.
- Commonly found in wildflower mixes.



Common Baby's Breath

Avoid wildflower mixes

Wildflower mixes often contain invasive plant species that spread rapidly and are not from the local area. Make sure to check the label for the Latin names to know exactly what you are planting in your garden and flower beds. Avoid purchasing seed mixes that do not include Latin names on the label. If you would like to plant wildflowers, it is best to research native wildflower species, common to your area, and plant individual flowers or purchase seed mixes from local reputable growers.

References:

Alberta Invasive Plant Council website: www.invasiveplants.ab.ca

Fire permits soon easier to get



The process to obtain a fire permit from Strathcona County will soon change.

An improved online process will be the only way to get a permit. If you do not have internet access or are uncomfortable using it, help will be available at Fire Station #1 in Sherwood Park and Fire Station #4 at Heartland Hall.

The new process provides more details around burning regulations, easier access to guidelines and a step-by-step process that will immediately identify potential issues with an application. In the new system, a fire permit will be valid for a full year from the date issued.

A fire permit is required if you live in rural Strathcona County and plan to have an open fire (including grass, brush, bonfire and recreational fires without a screen) or use an incinerator on your property (for properties five acres or more). Even with a valid fire permit, you could be liable for paying all damages and firefighting costs if your fire gets out of control.

Fireworks permit fee now in effect

A \$25 fee will be charged for all low hazard fireworks permits. A fireworks permit is required if you wish to sell, purchase or set off fireworks in rural areas. The discharge of fireworks is not allowed in Sherwood Park, Ardrossan, Josephburg, North and South Cooking Lake, Antler/Hastings/Half Moon Lakes and Collingwood Cove.

A fireworks permit can be applied for at Fire Station #1 in Sherwood Park or on the 2nd Floor of County Hall in the Fire Prevention and Investigation office.



FireSmart and proper addressing of your property

In order to aid Emergency Services in finding your home in a potential emergency, it is imperative that your address be visible from the road. In rural areas, the proper address must be posted in an obvious place; either on a sign adjacent to the driveway (at the property line) or on your mail or paper delivery box. The minimum size for each number or letter is 75 millimetres (three inches).

Be sure to trim back any overgrown vegetation that blocks sight lines of your address. Reducing the amount of flammable materials around your home is also consistent with the FireSmart program. This program was designed to educate residents on how to reduce the risk of wildfire affecting their homes.

Further information

www.strathcona.ca/sces
(under the subheading 'Fire')
780-464-8080.

Weed Inspection Program

This summer Transportation and Agriculture Services will again carry out its annual Weed Inspection Program to control the spread of noxious weeds.

Even though some have attractive flowers, noxious weeds are a serious concern in Alberta, and call for controls as required under the *Alberta Weed Control Act*. Since these plants are destructive to our native habitat, the province requires that all residents inhibit the growth and spread of noxious weeds on their properties.

What are noxious weeds?

Plants are categorized as noxious when they are aggressive, difficult to manage and invasive in nature. These plants:

- infest pastures and crops
- alter natural habitats
- compete with our native plants
- affect animal, insect and bird species
- are costly to control

How can a weed inspector help?

Strathcona County has five weed inspectors, each assigned to a specific zone. They are responsible to:

- act as a resource to provide information to residents on noxious weed control

- inspect lands for noxious and prohibited noxious weeds
- issue weed notices and follow through to compliance
- respond to and follow up on noxious weed complaints



Are dandelions noxious?

No, dandelions are not a noxious species of weed.

What do I do if I am issued a weed notice?

A weed notice is a legal document issued by a County weed inspector notifying a property owner of weed problems. As a landowner, it is your responsibility to control noxious weeds on your property. If you do not, the County will undertake this work at your expense.

Your efforts go a long way to maintain and enhance the economic vitality of our agriculture community and the beauty and biodiversity of Strathcona County.

Further information or to report a weed concern

780-417-7100
www.strathcona.ca/tas

Urban Wildlife Watch Richardson's Ground Squirrel

A cut-out-and-keep guide to urban wildlife

Appearance

- Richardson's ground squirrels (or as they are more commonly known, gophers) are roughly 12 inches long and weigh between 200 and 750 grams, depending on the time of year. Males are typically heavier than females.
- Gophers are dark brown with a light brown belly, and have a shorter tail than other types of ground squirrels.

Behaviour

- Gophers play an important part in our local ecosystem and are a major food source for many birds of prey and small mammals.
- They build extensive burrow systems with five to seven exits, marked by distinctive mounds of soil.
- Gophers eat seeds, grains, grasses and insects. Some gophers prey on the eggs and young of ground-nesting birds.
- Gophers enter hibernation between July and September and re-emerge in March. The males emerge first and establish a breeding territory.
- A litter of up to eight young gophers will be born in April or May.



Management

- Rozol bait is a registered anticoagulant poison, which after ingestion, prevents blood from clotting. Control measures are most effective when applied in early spring when the males emerge from hibernation. When using any rodenticide, read and closely follow the instructions on the label.
- Trapping can be effective, but labour-intensive. Trapping is best conducted soon after the gophers emerge from hibernation.
- Fumigation is another option. However fumigants are less selective than rodenticides. Fumigation works best at dawn, dusk or during the night, as this is when gophers tend to be in their burrows.
- Shooting is another effective, but time-consuming method. It is only permitted outside the special control, urban service and hamlet policy areas.

Further information

Transportation and Agriculture Services

780-417-7100 (24 hours)
www.strathcona.ca/tas



Rural Roadside Vegetation Control Program

This program will help Strathcona County keep roadsides clear of weeds and brush, while reducing the use of herbicides.

Keeping rural roadsides free of noxious weeds and brush:

- improves visibility at intersections
- improves visibility along the roadside making it easier to see any wildlife
- improves drainage
- controls noxious weeds
- makes it easier to clear the roads of snow

All roads south of Highway 16 will receive a spot spray application of herbicide and all roads north of Highway 16 will receive a broadcast application of herbicide.

In all country residential subdivisions, herbicide will be applied by the spot spray method on noxious weeds and brush under two metres, as required.

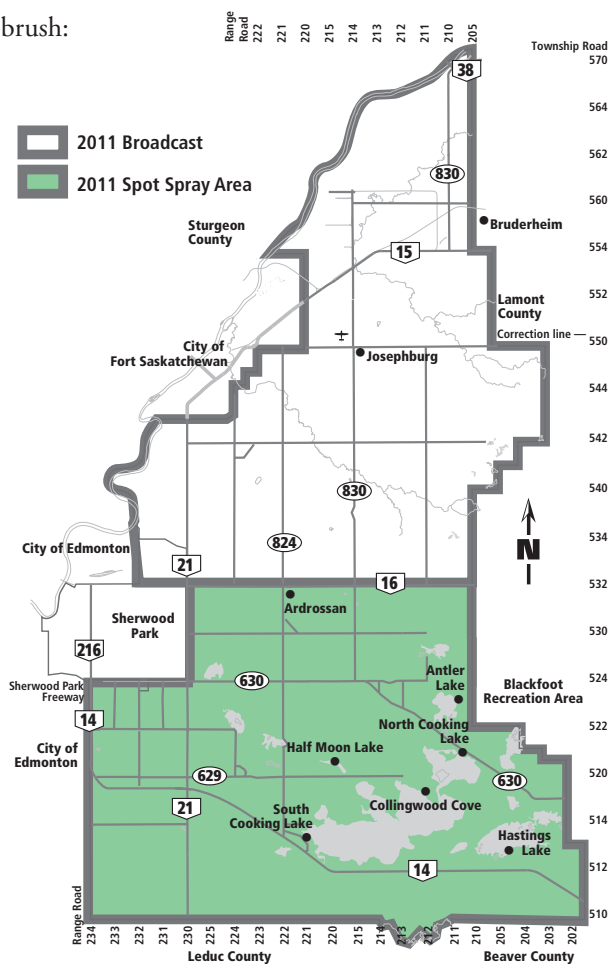
Landowner Option Program

If rural residents do not want to have herbicide used in front of their property they have the option to control vegetation adjacent to their property themselves, rather than having it done by County staff.

Residents' comments and questions are welcome.

Further information

www.strathcona.ca/tas
Mitch Weller at 780-410-6502



Rural Intersection Safety Project update

As a component of the Rural Intersection Safety Project (RISP) approved by Council, 83 country residential subdivisions (CRS) had stop bars and centrelines painted at intersections with the Range and Township (grid) Road network in fall 2010. The remaining (approximately 120) CRS developments will receive the same linemarking treatment this spring.

In general, line markings convey information to the driver without diverting their attention from the road. The centreline and stop bar markings are intended to guide the motorist so their vehicle is aligned to maximize the driver's sightline from a place of safety with respect to the intersecting 80 km/h grid road.

Other work this spring will be brushing within the road rights-of-way and sign improvements at 30 high-collision and/or limited vision intersections to improve driver awareness and sightlines.

Similar improvements will be done later this year on about 50 intersections which the County shares jurisdiction with Alberta Transportation.

Flashing Red Beacon Pilot Project update

The Flashing Red Beacon Pilot Project at the intersection of Township Road 514 and Range Road 232 has been underway since fall 2010. It began with two months of stop sign compliance analysis (a month before and after the installation of the beacon). Another month of analysis will be done in April and a final two months of analysis in the fall (a month before and after the beacon is removed). Once the data is reviewed, a report will be tabled with Council in early 2012. The report will outline the findings and recommendations from the 14-month study on the use of flashing red beacons in conjunction with existing stop signs.

Josephburg stop sign

The review of the stop sign orientation on Provincial Highway 830 at Township Road 550 will continue this spring, with the undertaking of traffic counts timed to coincide with the end of the Shell Upgrader construction traffic. Alberta Transportation has committed to undertake a public information meeting to announce their findings and recommendations.

Further information

Engineering and Environmental Planning
780-464-8279



Time for a little 'out-door' spring cleaning?



The Strathcona County Reduction of Abandoned Products (SCRAP) program

encourages the removal of abandoned products from private properties for disposal or recycling. If you have items on your property that you would like to 'abandon' to the SCRAP Program call 780-449-5514.



Green gardening workshops

Strathcona County Utilities is hosting two green gardening workshops this April at Millennium Place:



Edible landscape plants

April 14, 7-8:30 p.m.

Learn how to grow, harvest and use edible plants in the kitchen using a variety of interesting (and often native) edible trees, shrubs and perennials.

Green gardening for families

April 26, 7-8:30 p.m.

Learn to plan fun and educational gardening projects with your family and to design child friendly ecoscapes for a more nature-filled lifestyle.

Both workshops are presented by Claudia Bolli from Wild Green Garden Consulting. Registration is \$10 per person, per workshop.

Register online with Click-it

www.strathcona.ca/recreation
Limited spots are available.

Large item pickup

Do you have large items that are no longer usable? Coming in May and June, residents who subscribe to waste collection services from Strathcona County can put out two *large items at the front curb or end of your driveway on your regular collection day. We will haul them away! Items must be out by 7:30 a.m.

Large item collection days

Regular collection day	Large item collection day spring event
Monday	May 30
Tuesday	May 24
Wednesday	June 1
Thursday	May 26
Friday	June 3

* All items must be less than six feet by three feet (1.8m x 0.9m) and weigh less than 200 pounds (90 kg). Remove doors and lids to fridges and freezers, and make sure the coolant system is not damaged. Items with fuel or oil tanks (e.g. barbecues, lawnmowers) must have tanks removed. Fuel and empty fuel tanks can be taken to an Enviroservice event.

Refer to your 2011 waste collection calendar or our website for a list of acceptable and unacceptable items.

Enviroservice events

Enviroservice events are back for another season to help residents of Strathcona County keep harmful materials out of the landfill and recycle items not collected.

2011 dates

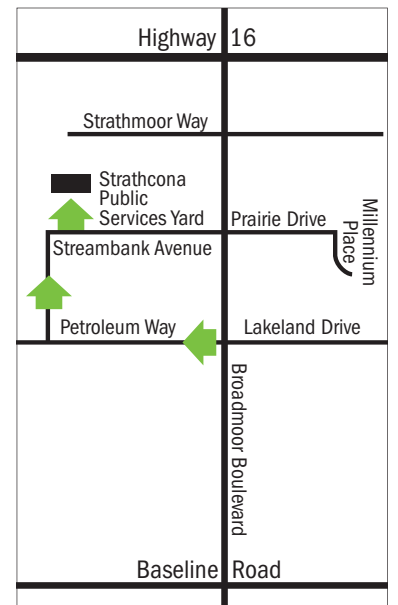
Date	Time
May 12	4 p.m. to 8 p.m.
May 28	9 a.m. to 1 p.m.
June 9	4 p.m. to 8 p.m.
June 25	9 a.m. to 1 p.m.
July 7	4 p.m. to 8 p.m.
July 23	9 a.m. to 1 p.m.
August 4	4 p.m. to 8 p.m.
August 20	9 a.m. to 1 p.m.
September 1	4 p.m. to 8 p.m.
September 17	9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Please note: This is a drop-off event. Enter the event on Streambank Avenue northbound via Petroleum Way.

Questions?

www.strathcona.ca/utilities
780-449-5514

The Enviroservice event is available for all Strathcona County residents even if you do not subscribe to the Green Routine. Events take place at Streambank Avenue Recycling Centre, 420 Streambank Avenue, Sherwood Park.



Digest

& Dates

Keep up to date with all that is happening in the County! New! Digest & Dates is a quick, at-a-glance page that highlights news and updates from Strathcona County; it also includes upcoming programs, services and events. You can find it in the Sherwood Park-Strathcona County News or at www.strathcona.ca under Notices. It runs the last Friday of each month.

Rural Living Days



Saturday, May 14

9:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

Ardrossan Recreation Complex

80-1 Avenue, Ardrossan

Plan to drop in at Rural Living Days – a family-friendly open house for rural residents.

Watch for details on the County website and in the local newspaper closer to the date.

Hosted by the Agricultural Service Board of Strathcona County.

Drop in for information sessions and workshops:

- water wells and septic systems
- vegetation and pest control
- water testing and conservation
- turf and lawn care
- waste management
- shelterbelts and tree care
- pond management
- community safety

Further information:

[780-417-7100](http://www.strathcona.ca/tas)
www.strathcona.ca/tas

Human & Coyote Interactions in Strathcona County



Wednesday, April 20, 2011

6 p.m. - 9 p.m.

Wye Community Hall

151 - 22559 Wye Road (Bailey's Subdivision)

During this workshop, we will cover:

- coyote behaviour
- people and coyote encounters
- coyote deterrence and prevention
- how to respond to coyote activity

Guest speakers from:

Alberta Sustainable Resource Development
University of Alberta - Urban Coyote Project

Further information

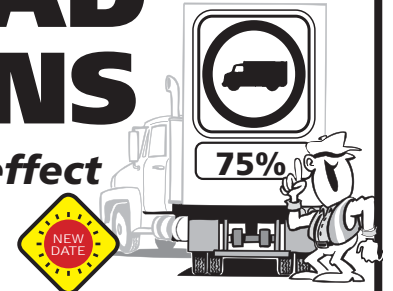
780-417-7100
www.strathcona.ca/tas

Lighten your load to protect our roads

ROAD BANS

Now in effect

March 28 to June 1, 2011



Load restrictions now apply to a majority of roads throughout Strathcona County and will be enforced until June 1, 2011.

Road bans may be lifted sooner, if conditions permit.

Road bans will be enforced with a ZERO-TOLERANCE approach. Road Use Agreements may be issued to accommodate non-divisible loads. Applications for these agreements are available at Transportation and Agriculture Services, 370 Streambank Avenue, Sherwood Park.

Further information

Transportation and Agriculture Services

780-417-7100 (24 hours)

www.strathcona.ca/tas

Enforcement Services

780-449-0170



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Horse Count 2011

April and May, 2011

...for horse owners and horse lovers

HORSE
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"Horse Capital of Canada"

Agriculture Services

Agriculture Services phone numbers

General questions 780-417-7100

Coordinator Joel Gould 780-417-7134
gould@strathcona.ab.ca

Pest control/weed inspection/vegetation control 780-417-7100
Mitch Weller 780-410-6502
wellerm@strathcona.ab.ca

Alf Kolenosky 780-417-7133
kolenosk@strathcona.ab.ca

Transportation and Agriculture Services is located at
370 Streambank Avenue
Sherwood Park, AB T8H 1N1

Office hours 8:30 a.m. to 12 noon, 1 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.
Monday to Friday

Website www.strathcona.ca/tas

Fax: 780-417-7109

Agricultural Service Board

The members are available to discuss matters of interest to you.

Councillor Jacquie Fenske (Chair) 780-464-8147

Councillor Linton Delainey 780-464-8206

Councillor Bonnie Riddell 780-464-8003

Councillor Peter Wlodarczak 780-464-8146

Paul Barlott 780-951-0631

Jackie Christie 780-422-8633

Jim Henry (Vice Chair) 780-719-4383

Howard Schneider 780-977-0023

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