

Country Talk

SPRING 2014



What is black knot?

Black knot (*Apiosporina morbosa*) is a fungal disease that causes greenish brown to black swelling in the stems of trees.

Spores are released following periods of warm, wet weather and are spread by heavy rainfalls, wind, birds and insects.

Black knot deforms branches and reduces their growth. If a tree is heavily infected it can become stunted and may eventually die from the disease. The fungus also puts the tree under considerable stress which makes it vulnerable to other pests and diseases in its weakened state.

A recent survey of the disease throughout Alberta revealed a significant and widespread distribution of black knot found on commercial, municipal, golf course, public and private lands and native stands.

Residents should regularly monitor their cherry trees for symptoms of black knot. In the early stages, the disease appears as a small light brown swelling usually found on the succulent green stems.

As the knots mature, the swelling will appear olive green with a velvety texture. The growth will then look like an elongated black knot on the tree.

If you detect black knot, follow these guidelines.

- **Prune** out the infected branches between late fall and early spring when the plants are dormant and the knots are easier to see.
- **Remove** the infected branches to at least 15 to 20 centimetres (6-8 inches) below the knot.
- **Sterilize** your cutting tools between each cut using bleach to prevent further spread of the disease.

DISEASED WOOD MUST BE DESTROYED IMMEDIATELY (burned, buried or removed from site). Diseased knots can produce and release spores for up to four months after removal.

There are few, if any, chemical controls for this disease.

The most effective way to slow the spread of black knot is to be vigilant about managing the disease in a timely manner. Remove infected branches as soon as you can to reduce the spread of this fungus.

It is imperative that we all become good stewards of the forests and ensure tree longevity. The more we use education as a tool, the better chance we have at reducing the spread of black knot.

Further Information
Transportation and Agriculture Services
780-417-7100



Getting to know your rural community!

Rural Living Days is an open house where rural residents can learn about their community and land stewardship from displays, informational booths and scheduled workshops.

Workshop topics include backyard pest control, turf and lawn care, pruning for beginners, tree health maintenance and understanding your septic system.

This year introduces an exciting marketplace featuring rural Strathcona County businesses. Come check out our local vendors!

When:
Saturday, June 7
9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

Where:
Ardrossan Recreation Complex
80-1 Avenue, Ardrossan

Rural Living Days is presented by Strathcona County's Agricultural Service Board.

Further Information
Transportation and Agriculture Services
780-417-7100

To find a listing of the workshops available at the event, please visit www.strathcona.ca/agevents

Some of the more common types of trees affected by black knot are:

- Amur Cherry
- Mayday
- Apricot
- Mongolian Cherry
- Nanking Cherry
- Chokecherry
- Pin Cherry
- Flowering Almond
- Wild Plum
- Flowering Plum
- Japanese Plum
- Korean Cherry
- Sour Cherry
- Prunus hybrids



Share the road

Spring is here, and with it comes the return of many different rural road users. Here are some tips for sharing the roads safely.

Drivers

Watch for agricultural equipment

Following a farm vehicle usually takes just a few minutes. Don't let frustration lead you to make a decision that may cause you and others harm. Be patient and slow down near agricultural equipment.

Give cyclists and horses ample space

Rural roads often have debris on the shoulder, which may bring bikes and horses out into the travelling lane. Horses may also become frightened by a passing motor vehicle and become unpredictable. Only pass when there are no oncoming vehicles, and it is safe to do so.

Slow down

Obey speed limits and slow down around other road users. Higher speeds give you less time to react to avoid a collision in all situations.

Agricultural Producers

Ensure equipment is clearly visible, implements are folded in and all lighting and signage requirements are followed.

Cyclists

Cyclists have the same responsibilities as a motor vehicle and are responsible to follow the same rules of the road. Ride only in single file, and obey all traffic controls.

Horses

Horses, whether ridden or driven, are considered vehicles on a roadway. They should be ridden as close as possible to the right hand side of the road going the same direction as the traffic.

Pedestrians

Walk on the left side of the road facing traffic.

Motorcyclists

Pay attention to speed. Rural roads can be rough and have a varying amount of loose gravel.

Further Information

Transportation and Agriculture Services
780-417-7100

Managing water on your property

Spring is a time of melting snow and ice. It is also a time for rural residents to manage spring melt. These simple tips will help keep water flowing on your property.

Monitor your culvert

When it comes to drainage and water flow, a culvert is one of the most important tools. Regularly checking and maintaining culverts and the area surrounding them will manage spring runoff. In winter, remove snow and ice from the culvert ends to prevent drainage restrictions.

Remove debris from natural drainage ways

Overgrown ditches are a common problem that can impact the flow of water from the culvert. Willows and other thick woody vegetation are common in these areas. The root structure often spreads lifting dirt and grass. Clearing vegetation, and if necessary, digging out the roots will improve the grade of the ditch.

Monitor beaver activity

If flooding is the concern, releasing small amounts of water from the dam may resolve the issue. A mesh guard extended off the culvert end is an option to reduce beaver damming activity.

Be a good neighbour

What you do on your property has the potential to affect neighbours upstream and down. When developing or landscaping your property, beware of the natural drainage path and avoid altering these areas.

Know the drainage rules

If you are considering options to divert water, it is highly recommended that you consult federal and provincial agencies for assistance. In many cases, formal approval will not be required but it is a good idea to educate yourself on the proper process.

Get educated on drainage easements

Drainage easements are registered on some lots to allow surface runoff from the road ditches through natural drainage paths on private property. Drainage easements and drainage easement documents would show up as encumbrances on titles to private property. Altering or obstructing flow in these easement areas can trap water in the ditches or cause a backup on a neighbour's property.

Further Information

Alberta Environment and Sustainable Resource Development Hotline
1-800-222-6514

Fisheries and Oceans Canada
780-495-4220

Transportation and Agriculture Services
780-417-7100



New County hamlet signs



As a part of Strathcona County's branding initiative, the County installed new entrance signs in each of the eight rural hamlets:

- Josephburg
- Antler Lake
- South Cooking Lake
- Collingwood Cove
- Hastings Lake
- Ardrossan
- Half Moon Lake
- North Cooking Lake

Ornamental weeds

After a long cold winter most gardeners are starting their vegetable seeds inside and looking to buy fresh young plants for their garden. Sometimes, however, gardeners unknowingly purchase noxious or prohibited noxious weeds. Not only are these weeds considered problematic by the Province of Alberta, they can cause years of headaches from repeated weeding.

Save yourself time and money by purchasing plants from the greenhouse that are not on the Weed Act list. For more information, contact the Invasive Species Council at www.abinvasives.ca or the County weed inspectors at 780-417-7100. They can help identify any plant that may be a noxious weed and can suggest alternative plants.

Plants to avoid

Himalayan Balsam

A large beautiful plant with orchid-like flowers that spreads by forcefully ejecting seeds from the seedpod at a distance of up to 5 metres. This type of dispersal creates a problem in flower gardens as the gardener will be constantly removing the seedlings throughout the season for many years. This plant is considered prohibited noxious because of the ecological damage it causes in riparian habitats.

Yellow Clematis

A large noxious weed that can extend up to 16 metres in height. The seed heads are attractive and unusual in form. Seeds can travel in the wind far distances, invading natural habitat or creating havoc in another garden. At one time, this species was found in most greenhouses, and was a popular choice to cover up unsightly fences as it grew large and fast.

Oxeye Daisy

The flower gardener's favorite stand-by is also a prolific seed former and designated as a noxious weed. This plant looks exactly like Shasta Daisy which is sterile and cannot grow from seed.

Common Tansy

Common tansy spreads prolifically by seed, eventually turning your nice border garden into a monoculture of yellow, choking out all the other plants. This plant is also toxic to grazing animals.

Creeping Bellflower

Creeping bellflower can grow roots anywhere and take over without being affected by repeated mowing. An entire lawn can be choked by this plant within a couple of years as it is very difficult to eradicate or contain unless the entire root system is dug out. A small piece of broken-off root can develop into another plant and continue spreading.

Further Information

Transportation and Agriculture Services
780-417-7100

www.strathcona.ca/weeds



Ardrossan Recycle Station is open for business!

The new location of the Ardrossan Recycle Station is just east of the Ardrossan Recreation Complex on 3rd Avenue.

Recycling at recycle stations is different than curbside collection. Items must be separated into the correct bins. Placing items in the wrong bin increases costs to the County because contents have to be sorted and processed before they can be recycled. Recycling collected at the stations is sent to a different location for processing than our curbside program.

To find out which items are collected at this station, please visit www.strathcona.ca/recycle

Please be considerate when using the station. The 153rd Ardrossan Boy Scouts maintain the site so let's work together to keep it safe.

Further Information

Utilities
780-449-5514

Planning a new approach on your property?



Currently, each lot in Strathcona County is permitted one access that must conform to the Design and Construction Standards. All landowners are required to complete and submit an application with the required fees to Transportation and Agriculture Services for review and approval of any additional accesses to County roads.

Unapproved accesses or accesses that do not conform to County Standards may be removed in order to maintain the safety and integrity of the transportation network.

Find out more about the application and approval process

Transportation and Agriculture Services
780-417-7100
www.strathcona.ca



Himalayan Balsam



Yellow Clematis



Oxeye Daisy



Common Tansy



Creeping Bellflower

Container gardening

Container gardening is an inexpensive and simple way to grow fresh, healthy, produce.

Why Containers?

Container gardening allows you to grow food virtually anywhere with much greater control and flexibility. It also results in less pest and disease issues on the plants.

There are many methods of container gardening such as square foot gardening, raised bed gardening and hanging or wall mounted containers. It is a great option when space is limited.

Anything you can grow in a traditional vegetable garden can be grown in containers. Many vegetables perform better in a container such as peppers, tomatoes, lettuce, beans, spinach, carrots and radishes. There really are no restrictions on what vegetable can be grown in a container. Let your imagination run wild!

Containers and prepping pots

There is no need for specialized equipment and you don't need to go out and purchase expensive pots, containers or tools. Look around the yard and see what can be 're-used' and take it from there. If you do need to buy new containers they do not have to be expensive. Vegetables are happy growing in just about anything.

All containers, whether clay, wood, plastic or ceramic, require an adequate number of holes in the bottom for drainage. Holes should be drilled or punched in containers that do not drain quickly after each watering. If the container is set on a solid surface such as a cement or patio floor, raise the container one or two inches by setting it on blocks of wood to improve drainage.

Most vegetables can be grown in containers as long as there is enough space for root development. The spacing requirements on the seed packets or plant tags will help determine the size of the container required.

The ideal planting medium for containers should provide rapid drainage with sufficient water retention to keep the root zone uniformly moist. There are many 'soilless' potting mixtures on the market and these tend to work best. They are lightweight and free from soil-borne diseases and weed seeds.

Fertilization

Soilless mixes contain little, if any nutrients so regular fertilization is important to successful container gardening. A 5-10-10 or 10-10-10 fertilizer will keep your garden growing well all season.

Watering

Some vegetables need watering every day, depending on container size and weather conditions. The best way to water is with a watering can or sprayer attachment on a garden hose. Be careful to not get water on the leaves of the plants as this may cause some damage.

Sun exposure

The containers should be receiving at least five hours of sunlight per day for maximum performance. The beauty of container planters is that you can move them around to catch the sun as it moves.

Further Information

Transportation and Agriculture Services
780-417-7100



Container gardening is a fabulous hobby and is a flexible way of growing food for you and your family.



CountyWorks

CountyWorks is the place to find out more about construction projects in and around Strathcona County.

www.strathcona.ca/countyworks

View the interactive web map and find the most up-to-date information on County road construction projects.



Did you forget to renew?

Love your dog...
License your dog.

All dogs in Strathcona County (including rural areas) are required to be licensed. Residents are permitted to license up to two dogs per household. An over-limit permit is required to keep more than two dogs. Dogs must be licensed annually by March 31.

Dog owners must ensure that their pets' barking does not disturb neighbours. Dogs must stay on the owner's property and not be allowed to run free. Strathcona County Enforcement Services pick up stray dogs and act on the complaints of neighbours about loose dogs.

Further Information

Enforcement Services
780-449-0170
info@strathcona.ca
www.strathcona.ca/dogs



Community gardening

A community garden is any piece of land (publicly or privately held) that is cultivated by a group of people rather than a single family or individual. Unlike public parks and other green spaces maintained by local governments, community gardens are generally managed and controlled by a group of unpaid individuals or volunteers – usually the gardeners themselves.

Benefits of community gardening

- supplementing meals
- learning by doing
- getting to know your neighbour
- contributing food to local Food Bank or charities (Plant a Row Grow A Row)

For more information on how you can start a community garden, contact:

Transportation and Agriculture Services
780-417-7100

There are three active community gardens in Strathcona County:

Old Man Creek Tree Nursery

South of Highway 16 on Range Road 231, these gardens were the first community gardens in Strathcona County. Managed by Strathcona Garden Club.

Bev Facey High School

Shared by the Elk Island School district and Strathcona County, these smaller plots are in an enclosed area and managed by a very active group of volunteers.

Clover Bar Ranch Community Gardens

Located at Cimmaron Way and Jim Common Drive, these gardens are in raised planter beds and are maintained by an enthusiastic group of dedicated gardeners.

Weed Inspection Program

Not all flowers are friendly

This summer weed inspectors will be out talking about the growth and spread of noxious weeds. By working together, we can continue to maintain and enhance the beauty and biodiversity of Strathcona County.

What are noxious weeds?

Plants are categorized as noxious or prohibited noxious when they exhibit invasive tendencies.

This could include:

- infestation of crops and pasture
- reduction of the biodiversity of native habitat
- damage to infrastructure
- competition with native plants
- adversely affecting the natural behaviour of animals, insects and bird species

Weed inspectors:

- act as a resource to all County residents
- respond to invasive plant queries
- monitor the spread of invasive species



www.strathcona.ca/weeds

Further information:
Transportation and Agriculture Services
780-417-7100

What is tunneling/digging in my lawn?

Voles are a common member of the mouse family found in all habitats within Strathcona County.

Voles do not hibernate and will often consume their body weight in vegetation daily. Their over-wintering feeding impact is noticed as the snow melts, when shallow tunnels and runway systems between the snow and ground interface appear.

Appearance

- compact rodent with short legs and tail
- small eyes and ears giving the animal a rounded stocky appearance
- vegetarians with a diet consisting of seeds, roots, bark and leaves

Behaviour

During the winter they gnaw on trees and shrubs often removing the bark from ground to snowline which in turn kills the plant.

Populations tend to fluctuate over a four to six year period, with a potential of five litters per year, at three to six young per litter. Vole numbers expand very quickly when food resources are available.

Voles like dense cover so it is helpful to mow yards frequently and clear excess vegetation and debris away from tree bases. Trees and shrubs may be base wrapped with hardware mesh or synthetic protectors available at horticultural supply outlets.

Raking your lawn during spring cleanup will remove vole debris caused by tunneling and will encourage grass regrowth.

Management

Voles are easy to bait with rodent toxicants placed in weather-proof dispensers purchased from farm and horticultural supply stores. Always follow label instructions when using commercially available toxicants.

Store pet food and bird seed in sealed containers to deter rodents from storage sheds and yards. Overflowing and spilled seeds from bird feeders attract pests to backyards so cleanup and vigilance is recommended.

Trapping may be utilized in small areas to help limit vole damage. Be sure to use gloves when handling rodents and traps.

If a vole infestation is suspected on private property, then control measures could be implemented in order to reduce economic and aesthetic losses.

Further Information

Transportation and Agriculture Services
780-417-7100



Vole tunneling

Meadow Vole / Field Mouse





2014 Rural Roadside Vegetation Control Program

Control of noxious weeds is a responsibility of all landowners. Strathcona County's Rural Roadside Vegetation Control Program is carried out annually to control weeds on County property and protect adjacent property from encroaching weeds and other problem species.

A variety of mechanical techniques and risk-reduced herbicides are used to ensure a healthy and competitive grass stand, while minimizing weeds and other problem vegetation. We adhere to industry standards provided by Alberta Environment and Sustainable Resource Development.

Keeping rural roadsides free of noxious weeds and brush improves:

- visibility at intersections and along roadsides
- efficiency of snow clearing
- drainage

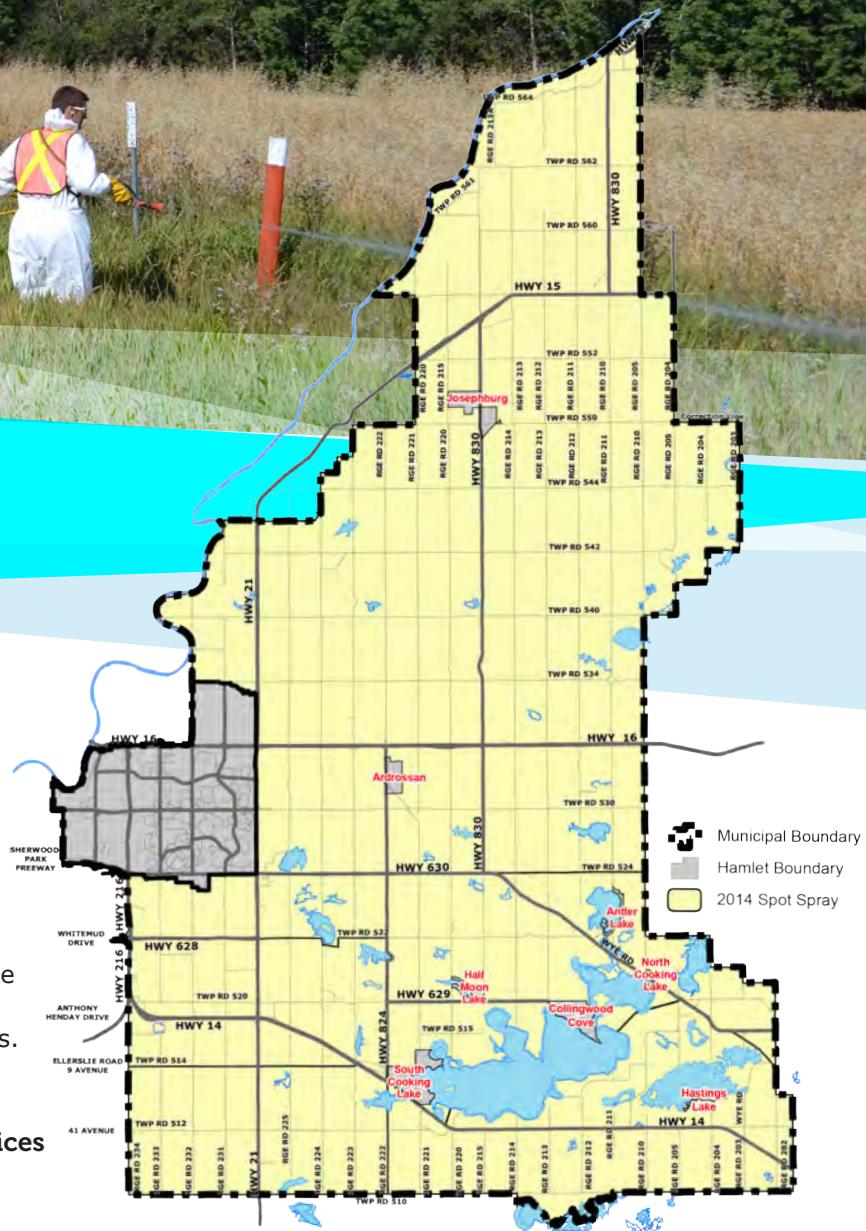
All County maintained right-of-ways will be treated with herbicide where required for the control of noxious weeds and problem brush species this year.

Landowner Option Program

This program provides the landowner the option to control vegetation in the ditch adjacent to their property. To take part in the program, please contact Transportation and Agriculture Services.

Further Information

Transportation and Agriculture Services
780-417-7100
www.strathcona.ca/tas



There are now two rural contact offices to serve you better!

As "satellite" service of County Hall, the rural liason team is dedicated to serving residents in rural Strathcona County with:

- information on County programs for rural residents
- assistance with resident inquiries and issues
- fire permits, dog licences, maps, County bill payment accepted (by cheque)
- Commissioner for Oaths services - free of charge
- computer/Internet access... and more

South Contact Office

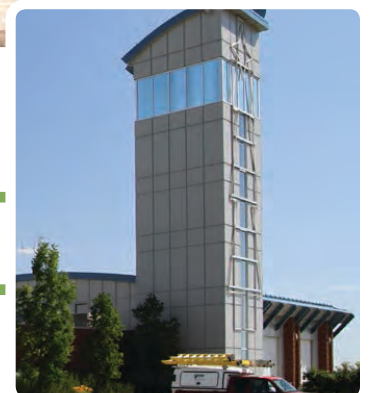
Office hours: Wednesday to Friday
1 p.m. to 4 p.m.

Location: 22142 South Cooking Lake Road
Office located in Fire Station #2

Heartland Hall Contact Office

Office hours: Monday to Thursday
1 p.m. to 4 p.m.

Location: 55305 Range Road 214
Office located in Fire Station #4



www.strathcona.ca/rural

CountryTalk

News for rural residents provided by Strathcona County's Agricultural Service Board



The Agricultural Service Board (ASB) acts as an advisory body to Council on agriculture matters, while promoting and developing agriculture policies and programs to meet the needs of residents and the municipality.

Further Information:

Agricultural Service Board
Councillor Bonnie Riddell, Chair
780-464-8003

Transportation and Agriculture Services
Joel Gould, Manager, Agriculture Services
780-417-7100