

CountryTalk

FALL 2014



Agriculture Master Plan for Strathcona County

In 2003, Strathcona County published its 'Future of Agriculture Study'. This study identified strengths within the agricultural industry and provided recommendations for future opportunities.

The purpose of the Agriculture Master Plan is to build on this study and create a plan that will assist in directing the continued preservation, growth and development of agriculture in Strathcona County. This document will provide consistency to administrative decisions surrounding agriculture and the agri-food industry.

Strathcona County is a large and diverse county. It includes the urban centre of Sherwood Park, and surrounding rural territory with several hamlets, acreage developments, farms and two airports. The agricultural flavor within the County is diverse; it includes a spectrum of homegrown to commercial production operations.

Plan requirements

The Agriculture Master Plan will address the following goals.

- Provide agricultural recommendations that align with Strathcona County's strategic plan and sustainability pillars.

- Include a comprehensive public consultation strategy.
- Raise the profile of agriculture by promoting the importance of agricultural stewardship and the protection of heritage farmland.
- Identify future trends in agriculture to advance opportunities in Strathcona County.
- Develop a long-term vision and policy that will protect agricultural operations within a diverse land use framework.
- Identify measurable implementation strategies.

Questions about the development of the Agriculture Master Plan can be directed to:

Transportation and Agriculture Services
780-417-7100

Municipal Land Licensing Program

Strathcona County is offering Municipal Lands to license for hay or pasture purposes. A list of available lands can be obtained by visiting www.strathcona.ca/landlicensing

Packages are also available for pickup at:

Strathcona County Hall
Planning and Development Services
Land Management Services
2001 Sherwood Drive
Sherwood Park, T8A 3W7

Further information

Planning and Development Services
780-464-8263
780-410-6524



Pruning Tips

Mild fall weather may have you thinking about pruning your trees and shrubs but it is best to wait until spring.

Pruning a little branch or two is fine, but bigger tasks such as thinning the crown or cutting a big limb should wait until after the first hard frost.

Prune trees and shrubs in late winter or early spring

The best time to prune trees and shrubs is when the leaves have fallen and the trees are fully dormant. For most trees, this is in late winter to early spring.

Don't prune when wet

As a general rule of thumb, don't prune when it is damp outside as it promotes the spread of diseases. Damp weather encourages the growth of microbes.

Keep your pruning tools clean and sharp

Disinfect your pruning tools between cuts if you are working on a diseased tree. This is extremely important when pruning black knot infested trees.

Do your homework

Be sure you do the research on your trees and shrubs before you make that first cut. Remember, once you take it off there is no going back!

Advantages to pruning in late winter to early spring

- Trees pruned in the fall may not have time to recover before winter.
- Better able to see the tree's structure and identify disease and insect problems.
- No new growth is stimulated while the tree is dormant.
- Vigorous spring growth will hide pruning wounds, especially in evergreens.

Always check for overhead power lines and contact 310-Wire if there are branches growing into power lines.

Under the Alberta Agricultural Pests Act (APA), the Elm Pruning Ban is in effect between April 1 and September 30. This pruning ban is in effect throughout Alberta to prevent the spread of Dutch Elm Disease.

Further information

Transportation and Agriculture Services
780-417-7100



Manure Management for Horse Owners

Along with the joys of owning a horse come the responsibilities of manure management.

The manure that can build up from one horse in a year is substantial, and must be managed in order to avoid intestinal parasites, flies or other insects, and objectionable odours. A poorly managed manure pile can become an environmental contaminant due to runoff and leaching into sensitive riparian areas and water bodies.

To prepare an effective management plan, it is important to estimate a realistic amount of manure from your operation. For example, an 1,100 pound horse may produce 31 pounds of feces and 10 litres of urine per day.

Manure management tips

- 1. Break it up:** Using harrows to break up clumps of manure can assist in manure breakdown. When harrowing, spread the clumps around; the more surface area that can be created, the faster the natural breakdown process can occur. This option is most feasible for operations that have one horse per acre of pasture.
- 2. Store it:** Manure storage can be considered a temporary solution before further disposal. Site selection for manure storage is important and must follow all guidelines set out by the Agricultural Operations Practices Act and Regulations. Storage facilities require the following:
 - Floors that reduce leaching (i.e. concrete or hard packed clay)
 - Roof or covering to reduce runoff and seepage
 - Walls to contain the pile and facilitate the use of small equipment

- 3. Compost it:** Transforming yard wastes into compost can be one of the most useful things to do with manure. Composting reduces odour, kills existing parasites and weed seeds in the material and reduces the size of the waste by up to 50 percent.

By using a composting system, one can also dispose of other common yard wastes like grass clippings and leaves.

- Piles should be a minimum of one cubic metre.
- Manure and bedding can be added directly to the pile.
- Temperature of compost heaps should be monitored weekly and kept between 55°C to 65°C.
- Turn and mix piles for even degradation.

Finished compost can be used as a soil amendment, growth media, mulch or fertilizer. On average, a well-managed pile can be composted in two to three months in the summer or four to six months in the winter.

Further information

Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development
www.agric.gov.ab.ca

Transportation and Agriculture Services
780-417-7100

Poster contest



In the spring of 2014, the Agricultural Service Board held its annual poster contest for grades 3, 4 and 5 students from Strathcona County and Fort Saskatchewan. The students were asked to draw posters with the theme Fur and Feathers on the Farm. Strathcona County Council selected the winners who were each presented a cheque at the June 17, 2014 Council meeting.

The Agricultural Service Board wishes to thank all the students who entered the contest.





What's in Your Water?

A free test of your well water can protect your family and your property.

Those who live in urban municipalities seldom worry about whether or not their water is safe to drink, because regulations are in place that require municipalities to treat and test water quality on a regular basis. For rural residents who rely on wells for their household water, access to an adequate supply of clean drinking water is not as simple as turning on a tap. Those who get their water from private wells are responsible for managing and maintaining their wells and ensuring their water supply is tested regularly and is safe to drink.

"Even though testing is free of charge for residential users through Alberta Health Services, we're finding that some people aren't testing their water," says Debra Mooney, an environment health consultant with Alberta Health and an advocate for the Working Well Program. "People need to know what's in their water. Some well water has high nitrate levels which can be harmful to small infants when mixed in their formula. Other harmful substances can also make their way into wells and since water quality can change over the lifetime of a well, regular testing is the only way to be certain that well water is safe for human consumption."

Testing well water on a regular basis also provides a baseline of the water quality, which

can be very important to a well owner if things go wrong. "Routine testing can pick up changes in water quality early on and help a well owner realize that certain maintenance procedures need to be done to preserve water quality and increase the lifetime of a well," says Jamie Wuite, Executive Director of Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development's Irrigations and Farm Water Division. "A baseline is also important information to have when you suspect your water quality has been negatively affected by another party. If you never tested your water quality, it's hard to prove that it has been negatively affected."

Over time, land use changes or structural degradation of an aging well can change or affect water quality. Private well owners can't take water quality for granted. Regular testing of well water is vital to preserve the health of rural families and to ensure that ground water remains safe for many generations to come.

Learn How to Manage Your Well

Online resources and free community-based workshops offered by the Working Well program provide well owners with the information and tools they need to properly care for their wells. For more information, including a fact sheet on taking water samples, visit the Working Well website at www.workingwell.alberta.ca

Watch for wildlife on roads



Many species are more active during dawn and dusk, particularly deer and moose during the fall mating season.

Reduce the chance of a collision

- Stay alert and drive at a speed appropriate to the road conditions, especially along rural roads.
- Reduce speed at night, especially where wildlife frequently cross, i.e. near water, wooded areas and open spaces.
- Use high-beams when possible.
- Look for more than one animal - some species travel in groups.
- Leave plenty of room when driving around an animal; a frightened animal may run in any direction.



Weed inspectors wrap up another busy season

Thank you to everyone for working cooperatively with Strathcona County's weed inspectors this past summer. In most cases, residents took immediate action to control weeds after the weed inspector met with them to discuss their concerns.

We appreciate your assistance and look forward to your continued support in controlling weeds in Strathcona County.

Further information

Transportation and Agriculture Services
780-417-7100

Watch for agricultural equipment on roads and highways

Fall means agricultural equipment on rural roads and highways. Take extra precautions when you encounter agricultural equipment on your travels. Driving safely is in everyone's best interest.

Farmers use a variety of machinery for various agricultural operations. Today's farmer may have fields in several locations, resulting in having to cross public roads with large machinery.

Being safety minded is the best insurance against risk. According to Canadian Agricultural Injury Surveillance Program, 13 percent of farm-related fatalities are traffic related.

Typical circumstances include left-turn collisions, rear-end collisions and passing collisions.

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.

Defensive driving tips for motorists

- **Be alert.** Watch for farm vehicles on rural roads, especially at harvest.
- **Keep your distance.** Stay at least 15 metres or five car lengths back.
- **Slow down.** As soon as you see a slow-moving vehicle, slow down immediately.
- **Be patient.** Don't pass until the road is clear of traffic and it is safe to pass.
- **Make sure you're clear.** When passing, make sure you can see the farm vehicle in your rear-view mirror before you change back into the right lane.



Hunting in Strathcona County

2014 hunting season – September 1 to December 7

Alberta Fish and Wildlife, Edmonton District, is responsible for wildlife management and enforcement of Alberta's Wildlife Act.

Benefits to allowing hunting

- Reduces wildlife overpopulation and disease. As more and more animals crowd together, diseases often increase such as mange and rabies. Harvesting animals promotes a healthy wildlife population.
- Large wildlife populations can cause property and crop damage. Hunting helps balance the number of animals on the landscape and reduces the incidents of damage to crops, trees, fruit and gardens.

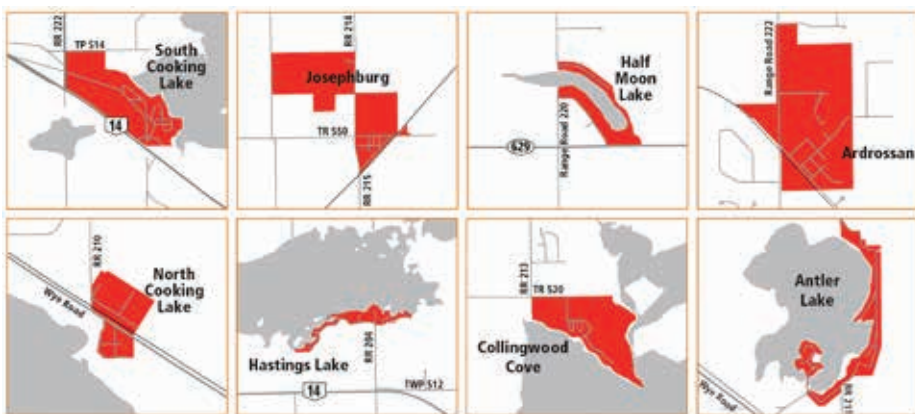
The rights of landowners

A large portion of the privately owned land in the County falls into the category of occupied land as defined under the Wildlife Act. The following regulations apply to hunting on occupied land.

- A hunter needs permission from the landowner or occupant to hunt on a given property. It is entirely the decision of the landowner or occupant whether to allow hunting on the property.
- The landowner is responsible to ensure that the hunter understands any conditions on which hunting is being permitted. For example, hunting may be allowed for one day, several days or longer. The landowner may specify the number of hunters allowed, or particular areas they are to avoid.

Where hunting is and is not permitted

The discharge of firearms in Strathcona County is controlled by the County's Firearm Control Bylaw 3-2014 and is enforced by the RCMP. Firearms may not be used for hunting in Sherwood Park, rural hamlets or County property (see maps below).



The use of firearms is not permitted in Sherwood Park or in the rural hamlets (Firearm Control Bylaw 3-2014)

The use of firearms is restricted within the Special Control Area. In this area, shotguns and muzzle-loading rifles, bows and arrows, and cross-bows may be used to hunt white-tailed deer and antlerless moose during this year's Strathcona White-tailed Deer Hunt and Antlerless Moose Special Licence season from October 25 to December 7.

Outside of the Special Control Area, Sherwood Park and rural hamlets, Strathcona County does not have bylaws restricting the use of firearms. Provincial and federal regulations apply in these areas.

The County is divided into three different Wildlife Management Units (WMUs). Different regulations apply to each. Check regulation details.

Hunting game birds with a shotgun on road allowances is not allowed in the County. Strathcona County is a Specialized Municipality and, because of this designation, all road allowances are considered County property. **There is no hunting allowed on County property.**

Further information

The 2014 Alberta Guide to Hunting Regulations is now available. For locations of hunting licence issuers please visit the Government of Alberta website at www.albertaregulations.ca or call 1-877-944-0313.

Alberta Fish and Wildlife Edmonton District Office
780-427-3574

Transportation and Agriculture Services
780-417-7100

24-hour numbers

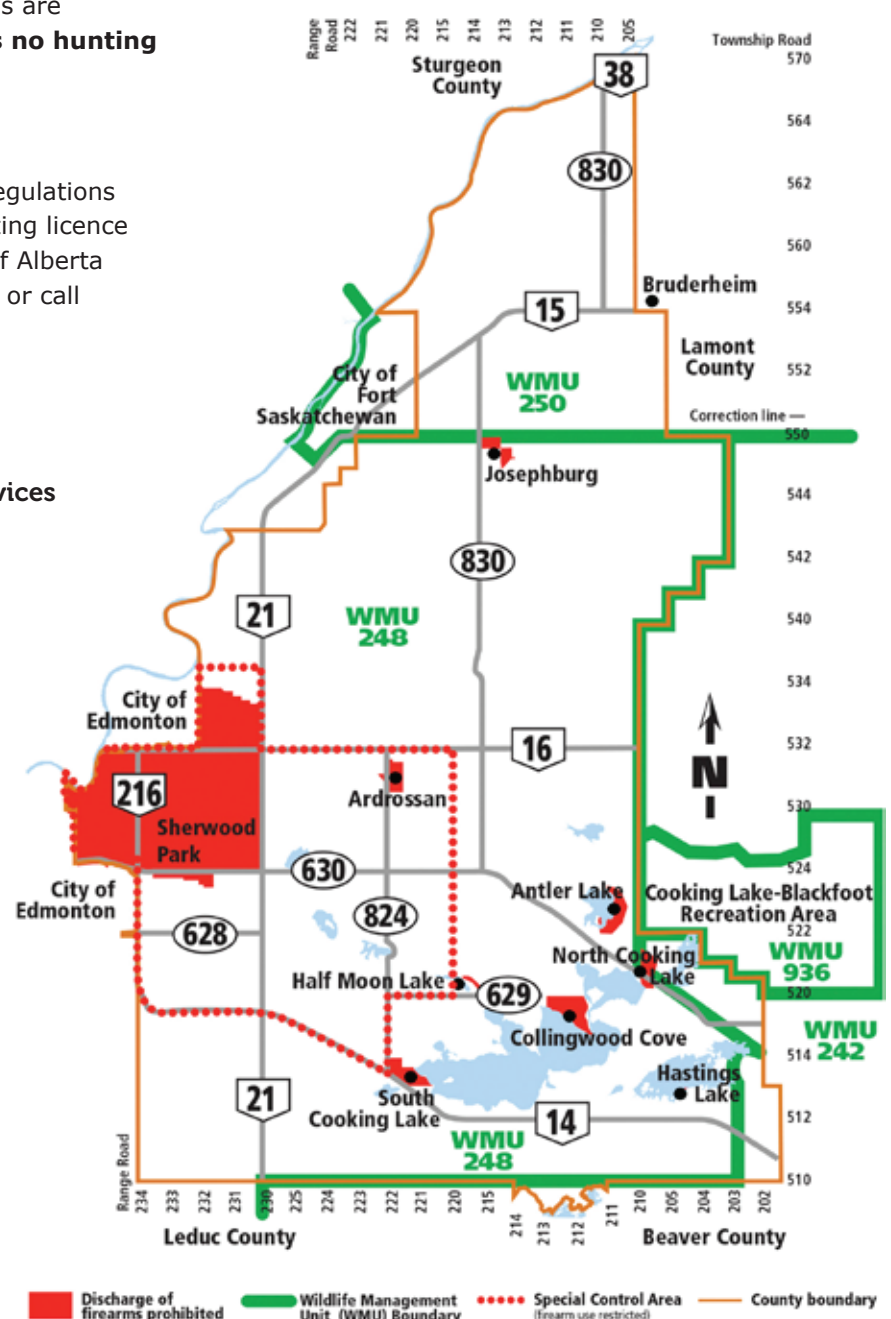
RCMP Strathcona County
780-467-7741

Report-a-Poacher
1-800-642-3800



2014 Hunting Regulations Update

The hunting of antlerless moose in WMU 248 during the October 25 - December 7 Antlerless Moose Special Licence season is now permitted in Leduc County as well as Strathcona County.



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.

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

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

www.strathcona.ca

