The Division of Agriculture Activities

January 03, 2012

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

Winter solstice has come and gone and a new year is just around the corner. Hopefully you have written down your new year's resolutions and crossed off all those accomplished from this last year's list. The New Year always brings change and this year is no exception. The Division of Agriculture would like to welcome its newest employee, Nate Hamelink. He is now part of the team at Mt. McKinley Meat & Sausage. Next time you stop in, be sure to welcome him.

Just a few points of interest I would like to mention:

- The 2012 Legislative Session starts January 17th, 2012. Legislation that affects the Agriculture industry will be covered in the newsletter. I want to encourage you all to participate and stay abreast of legislation that is of interest to you this session. Remember that your voice is your most powerful tool.
- If you are a Native American and interested in serving on a federal board, the USDA is currently seeking qualified nominees to serve as representatives on the Council for Native American Farming and Ranching. The formal notice can be found at 76 Fed. Reg. 76,120 (Dec 6, 2011).
- If you are producer of any size considering a Good Agricultural Practice (GAP) audit, a useful free tool is available at: http://onfarmfoodsafety.org/. You can build a food safety plan right on the site, research information on agricultural chemicals and much more.

The Division is in the process of updating our Long Range plan and is looking for industry input. If you have a few hours available and are interested in participating in a teleconference please contact Lora Haralson at: Lora.Haralson@Alaska.gov, or call her at 907-761-3851.

I hope you had a Merry Christmas and I wish you a healthy prosperous new year.

-Franci Havemeister

"I don't know who my grandfather was; I am much more concerned to know what his grandson will be"

- Abraham Lincoln.

Agriculture Calendar

► Thurs. Jan. 5th, 3:30 - 5 pm:	**DEC Animal Care Workshop - Domestic Pets**; Anch. *Teleconference: (800)* 315-6338; Passcode: 8213
► Tues. Jan. 17th:	**27th Alaska Legislative Session begins**; Juneau.
► Wed. Jan. 25th- Thurs. Jan 26th:	**Alaska Greenhouse & Nursery Conference**; Alyeska. *Registration Information:* http://www.uaf.edu/ces/
► Thurs. Jan. 26th- Fri. Jan 27th:	**Alaska Peony Growers Conference**; Alyeska. *Registration Information:* http://www.uaf.edu/ces/
► Mon. Jan. 30th, 1:00 pm:	**BAC Regular Meeting**; Division of Ag., Palmer AK. *To participate via telephone: (800)* 315-6338; Passcode: 122#

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

Restaurant Rewards Program Offers Incentives to Local Alaska Restaurants

The Division of Agriculture Marketing team is excited to announce the new Restaurant Rewards program. If you know of an Alaska restaurant owner or Chef - point them towards this program. Designed to encourage restaurants to source more Alaska Grown specialty crops, this program offers cash reimbursements for food sevices that use Alaska Grown crops.

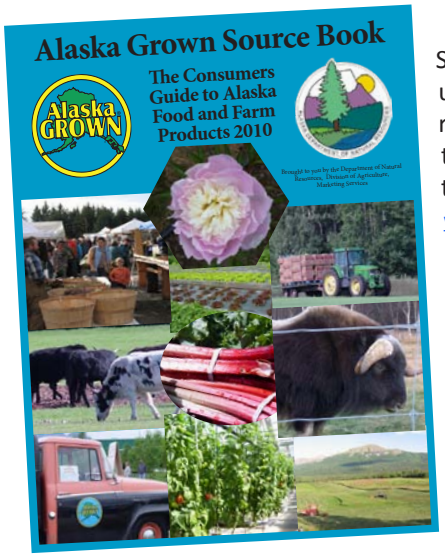
More information about this program, and an application are now available on our web site. Contact Kristi Krueger with questions at Kristi.Krueger@alaska.gov or 907-761-3858.

Specialty Crop Grant Webinar - Januay 31st

Thinking about applying for a Specialty Crop Grant in 2012? Attend a webinar with program manager Amy Pettit on Tuesday, January 31st at 1pm to learn more. The webinar will include an overview of the Specialty Crop Competitive Grant; a detailed definition of specialty crops, examples of previously funded projects, and a lengthy Q & A session.

Information about the Specialty Crop Grant Program is available online, at dnr.alaska.gov/ag/ag_grants.htm. You will be able to attend the webinar for free, seeing the presentation on your home computer. If you have any questions, please contact Amy Pettit at (907) 761-3864 or email Amy.Pettit@alaska.gov.

2012 Alaska Grown Source Book - Is Your Business Listed?



Was your farm listed in the 2010 Alaska Grown Source Book? Do you want to be listed in the updated 2012 version? Soon the Division will be requesting updated information from all farmers throughout the State, to be used in the preparation of the 2012 Source Book. Stay tuned to our website for more information.

The Alaska Grown Source Book is the only statewide listing of all Alaska farmers. The Division of Agriculture prints and distributes a minimum of 5000 copies each year and the online version is viewed over 500 times per month. The Source Book is an opportunity to have your farm and products included in this directory FOR FREE!

If you would like a copy of the current Alaska Grown Source Book, contact the Division of Agriculture at (907) 745-7200 or email Kristi.Krueger@alaska.gov.

Upcoming Growers' Workshops and Conferences

The season of growers' workshops and conferences is upon us. First up in January is the Alaska Greenhouse & Nursery Conference, January 25th & 26th. Immediately following this will be the Alaska Peony Growers Conference, January 26th & 27th. Both events will be held at Alyeska Resort in Girdwood. Online registration is available through the Cooperative Extension Service website.

Further details about these and other upcoming events happening throughout 2012 will available through the Agriculture Calendar, at dnr.alaska.gov/ag/ag_calendar.htm.

Remember to follow Alaska Grown on Facebook at facebook.com/dnr.alaskagrown.

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Alaska Farm-to-School Program Update

School Garden Census

For those of you who have not heard, the Alaska Farm-to-School program has a new resource available; **Alaska School Garden Food Safety Guidelines**. The guidelines offer guidance for those managing a school garden with the intent to utilize the school garden-grown food in the school meal program. It also could be referenced if you have a small farming or gardening operation that is interested in selling product to a school.

The guidelines are available at: dnr.alaska.gov/ag/FarmToSchool/SGfoodsafetyguide.pdf. To request that a copy of the guidelines be sent to your school, go to: surveymonkey.com/s/SGFoodSafetyGuideRequest.

To date, **Alaska School Garden Food Safety Guidelines** have been requested and distributed to 68 schools and community partners, representing 20 school districts and over 19,000 students, almost 15% of statewide K-12 student enrollment!

From the requests we learned who has a school garden and who is planning one. 40% of respondants have a school garden already, with an additional 13% having plans to start a school garden next summer. Another 38% of respondants listed a school garden as a long term goal.

We are also actively collecting data statewide, asking if schools have a school garden. Over half the schools in Alaska have been contacted thus far. We are excited to hear that there are a quite a few gardens existing already, and a lot of people interested in more information. Stay tuned to see what the state-wide school garden tally will be.

Volunteer Internship Opportunity

The Alaska Farm-to-School Program is seeking assistance. An unpaid volunteer position is available now. The individual selected will gain valuable experience with marketing concepts, community engagement, and information synthesis!

If you or someone you know is interested in this internship with the Farm-to-School program, contact Johanna Herron in Fairbanks at Johanna.herron@alaska.gov or (907) 374-3714, or Kristi Krueger in Palmer at Kristi.Krueger@alaska.gov, or (907) 761-3858.

2011 End of Year Report

For those of you that want to see the progress of the Farm-to-School program over this past year, a 2011 overview is now available from the Farm to School web page, at: dnr.alaska.gov/ag/ag_FTS.htm.

For Farm-to-School updates, news, grant opportunities, and announcements join our listserv at: list.state.ak.us/soalists/akfarmtoschool/jl.htm. Also remember to check out the Farm-to-School facebook page at: facebook.com/AlaskaFarmToSchool.

Property for sale by the Board of Agriculture and Conservation

513 South Valley Way, Palmer

Former Matanuska Maid Manufacturing Facility: Real Property and Improvements

3 acres in downtown Palmer, bounded by E. Dogwood Ave, Dahlia Ave, & Denali St.

ARLF LAND SALE #09-01
Over-The-Counter Offering:
Purchase Price $975,000.00.

Questions or comments regarding the sale process may be directed to Director Franci Havemeister, at 761-3867 or by email to Franci.Havemeister@alaska.gov.

Land Sales & Grazing Leases

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

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Inspection Section

Green Potatoes: The Solution

Potatoes can be green due to many causes but there are only two classifications: **Sunburn** and **Greening**. Sunburn is a 'greening' that occurs before harvest, due to direct sunlight exposure. This type of greening occurs in the field when tubers are not sufficiently covered with soil. When potatoes are exposed to sunlight, development of chlorophyll occurs, progressing from a light yellow to a definite green. If exposure to light is prolonged, chlorophyll develops deep into the tissue, resulting in a bitter taste associated with the alkaloid solanine. Greening after harvest can occur due to incandescent and/or fluorescent light exposure during storage, grading and/or placement on store shelves.

The degree of greening and length of time before it occurs varies with temperature, the brightness of light and the thickness of the potato epidermis. In order to avoid sunburn before harvest, maintain a sufficient soil cover above the potato seed piece and keep the hill wide enough for new tubers to expand underground.

Potatoes can become sunburned when the hill of soil does not completely cover the tuber

Photos: Univ. of Nebraska Cooperative Extension

To avoid greening after harvest, don't wash the tubers going into storage. Dirt remaining on potato tubers will offer some protection against exposure to light and greening. Store potatoes in the dark and chose light resistant packaging. In order to prevent retail greening, avoid displays near windows or under strong, fluorescent lights, have a good system of package rotation and store reserve stock in a cool, dark environment. Do not use spotlights on potato displays.

At home, store potatoes in a cool, dark area in a light resistant container, such as a brown paper bag or box with a lid. Wash potatoes only before cooking. Green areas, especially the peel, may be cut away and cook the rest for safe eating. If the potato tastes bitter, throw it away.

No matter what you do there will still be potatoes that suffer from Sunburn and Greening, so please follow the US No 1 and US No 2 allowable tolerances:

Sunburn

- **US No 1**: When removal causes more than 5% total weight of the potato.
- **US No 2**: When removal causes more than 10% total weight of the potato.

Greening

- **US No 1**: When removal causes more than 5% total weight of the potato or, when materially detracting from the appearance of the potato. Green color affecting more than 25% of the surface in aggregate is considered materially detracting.

Unwanted greening can occur when potato tubers are exposed to sunlight or artificial lighting

- **US No 2**: When removal causes more than 10% total weight of the potato. Green color affecting more than 50% of the surface in aggregate is considered materially detracting.

Futher information about green potatoes is available from the University of Nebraska Cooperative Extension, at digitalcommons.unl.edu/extensionhist/88/. If you have questions, you can also contact the Alaska Division of Agriculture at (907) 745-7200.

Plant Materials Center

http://plants.alaska.gov/

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Plant Materials Center

Rural Village Seed Production Project (RVSPP) Update

The RVSPP staff has launched a project website, located at www.plants.alaska.gov/rvspp. Profiles of each participating village are linked, and a project brochure is available. The RVSPP staff is developing an Alaska Native Seed Production Manual that will be available from the website in early 2012. Please check back for additional content.

In general, the village cooperators have slowed down considerably for the winter. RVSPP staff continues to make contact and offer additional information that is pertinent to their area or of interest in general. Progress on the project for each participant village is as follows:

Aniak, located on the southern bank of the Kuskokwim River, has a previously established farm with several acres available to them. This acreage will be used for RVSPP plantings.

In September, staff wild-harvested fireweed. The seed has been dried and is now being stored. Aniak staff also wild-harvested Bluejoint reedgrass in the fall. This seed should be ready to clean this January.

Aniak project staff have been diligent in ordering parts and supplies and will be ready to get a good start with planting in the spring.

Photo: Sue Lincoln | Alaksa PMC

RVSPP staff perform soil sampling in Aniak

RVSPP staff in **Hooper Bay**, on the Alaska's west coast in the Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge, are having a very quiet season, as the project has been shuttered for the winter.

The **Metlakatla** RVSPP staff has been keeping busy this winter cleaning Lupine seed that was harvested in previous years. They are also continuing to monitor and nurture their first seeding.

Pedro Bay is a village of 50 residents located on the North East corner of Iliamna Lake. During the summer of 2011, the Rural Village Seed Production Project broke ground on two and a half acres set aside for the project. The crew has shut down for the winter, and is anxiously awaiting the spring to put finishing touches on the seed house and host a dedication ceremony for the new structures.

Photo: Sherlie Taylor | Pedro Bay RVSPP

Planting site in Pedro Bay, cleared in 2011

The project staff in **Chignik Lake**, located on the Southern coast of the Alaska Peninsula in the Aleutian Mountains, have been ordering equipment for land clearing and preparation, and planting to occur in the spring. There is great community interest in this project as there is a need for revegetation materials locally and in the surrounding region.

Manley Hot Springs, in interior Alaska near the end of the Elliot Highway, is the only community participating in this project that is on the road system. The Manley Village Council is working to organize their staff and has plans to clear up to 20 acres in the spring.

For more information about the Rural Village Seed Production Project, contact the Alaska Plant Materials Center, at (907) 745-4469. You can also visit the RVSPP website, at www.plants.alaska.gov/rvspp.

Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation:
Division of Environmental Health

Upcoming DEC Animal Care Standards Workshops

The Office of the State Veterinarian is continuing their work to develop animal care standards for the state. These standards will be part of a comprehensive revision of the state animal health regulations. Future public workshops have been scheduled and will focus on only one animal category at a time.

The last remaining scheduled focus group is January 5, 2012, and will cover dogs only. Other pets will be covered in future workshops, to be scheduled in January and February. The dates and times will be posted on the Animal Care Standards web page.

We want to encourage anyone who is interested to attend workshops by telephone at 1-800-315-6338 (use pass code 8213 when prompted) or in person at the State Environmental Health Laboratory at 5251 Dr. MLK, Jr. Ave, Anchorage, AK, 99507. All meetings will be from 3:30 to 5:00 PM. If you are unable to attend meetings, feel free to submit your comments to us in writing via mail or email.

You can find minutes from previous meetings and agendas for future workshops on our website at: dec.alaska.gov/eh/vet/AnimalCareWorkshop.html. If you would like to be placed on our group email notification list to receive automatic updates on this project, please email your name, agency (if applicable), and phone number to jay.fuller@alaska.gov.

Photo: Dr. Sabrieta Holland

A guardian dog watches over a goat herd in the Mat-Su valley

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