

## QUICK FACTS ABOUT ALBERTA'S AGRICULTURE

The following pages will provide you with information on **FUN FACTS, ENVIRONMENTAL ASPECTS, PRODUCTION and RURAL CONNECTIONS** for

Barley

Beef Cattle

Canola Oil, Seed, Meal

Chicken

Dairy

Eastern Irrigation District

Eggs

Potato

Pulse

Sugar Beet

Alberta Veterinary Medical Association

## **COMMODITY: BARLEY**

### **FUN FACTS:**

Barley was a favorite grain of the ancient Egyptians, and the seafaring Vikings. Christopher Columbus brought barley to North America from Europe in 1493 and it has been cultivated here ever since. Barley was the staple food of the Roman Gladiators. The Latin name for barley is *Hordeum vulgare* and it derives directly from the Latin word for gladiators, *Hordearii*.

Barley was one of the earliest cereals used for food.

Barley is currently being studied for its cholesterol lowering properties in people.

French settlers originally brought barley to Canada.

Apart from its use in brewing, barley malt is commonly used for flavor and color in all types of food products.

### **ENVIRONMENTAL ASPECTS:**

Farmers are maintaining sustainable production practices to ensure the continuing productivity of the land for future generations.

Research is being done to find varieties that: adapt to environmental factors (e.g. drought, frost); are resistance to pests and diseases; increased yields; higher feed quality (livestock); greater nutritional benefits (human consumption); and improved processing and cooking traits.

### **PRODUCTION:**

Of the 11 to 13 million tonnes of barley produced in Canada each year, Alberta alone produces between 5½ to 6 million tonnes. Canadian production of barley ranks second in the world.

Almost every farmer in Alberta grows some barley in their regular crop rotations. There are 53,652 farms in Alberta, with a total farm population of 165,650. Our total provincial farm acreage covers an area slightly more than eight PEI's in size!

### **RURAL CONNECTIONS:**

Alberta has a reputation for growing the best quality barley in the world. Barley is one of the main feed grains in Alberta and contributes enormously to the success of the livestock industry. Barley fed beef and pork are prized exports and rank among the best in the world for quality.

Barley is also a human food. Pot barley and pearl barley can be used in soups, stews, salads, casseroles and puddings. Barley flour can be used in baking, even cookies. It also is a good source of energy and protein and provides many vitamins and minerals. Research has shown that barley can help regulate glucose levels in people with Type II diabetes, and it can lower blood cholesterol in people with high levels.

**For More Information go to:** [www.albertabarley.com](http://www.albertabarley.com)

## **COMMODITY: BEEF CATTLE**

### **FUN FACTS:**

How many gummi bears can you get from one beef animal? *Gummi bears are made from cattle?*  
Yes. It's true. The gelatin that goes into making gummi bears is made from the bone and hide of cattle. But it's certainly not the only ingredient that goes into the making of this popular gummi treat. So, to find the answer to the original question, University of Alberta Animal Science 200 students Casey Jacobs and Andrew Toma traded in their school books for cookbooks and did some experimenting of their own.

The students used the original gummi bear secret recipe and made a batch of gummi bears. Based on these experiments, the duo came up with a mathematical equation to answer their question. If a 600 kg beef animal nets 96 kg of bone and 36 kg of hide, 18.3 kg of pure gelatin can be produced. This translates into 73 kg of manufactured gelatin, which can be made into 500,412 delicious gummi bears – more than enough to satisfy your sweet tooth.

### **ENVIRONMENTAL ASPECTS:**

The beef cattle industry may have the closest connection to the environment of any livestock sector. The foundation of the Alberta beef industry is our vast area of grassland where grazing cattle convert forage into meat. Maintaining the health of these grasslands and protecting the water that flows through them are very important environmental issues for our industry.

Our confined feeding operations require secure water supplies for the cattle to drink and for irrigation of the forage that the cattle eat. Producers recognize that the manure produced by these operations provides a good opportunity to recycle plant nutrients and organic matter into the soil, but also know that the manure must be managed carefully to protect the environment around these sites.

The beef industry and our producers are well aware of the importance of protecting and enhancing our environment. We are involved in many initiatives designed to promote good stewardship of our air, soil, and water resources.

### **PRODUCTION:**

Alberta produces 67% of the total beef fed slaughter in Canada (2004), about 2.6 million head. Alberta has 39% of the cattle and calves in Canada—5,930,000 out of a Canadian total of 15,083,000 (January, 2005). Alberta has 39.3% of the beef cows and beef heifers for breeding in Canada—2.09 million (January, 2005).

### **RURAL CONNECTIONS:**

Veterinarians, auctioneers, butchers, grain producers, truck drivers

**For More Information go to:** [www.albertabeef.org](http://www.albertabeef.org)

## **COMMODITY: CANOLA OIL, SEED, MEAL**

### **FUN FACTS:**

In some Mexico City grocery stores, small canola plants are sold in bunches to consumers, as treats for their pet finches or canaries.

Canola oil can now be made into bio-degradable plastics at the University of Alberta.

Cows fed canola meal (what is left over after crushing the oil from the seed) produce more milk than those fed other animal feeds.

### **ENVIRONMENTAL ASPECTS:**

Farmers use thermometers to check the temperature of the soil so that the canola seeds can be planted in soil that is not 'too cold'. When seeds are cold they do not grow well, and sometimes, they do not grow at all.

Each spring, many canola farmers plant the canola seeds directly into the stubble (leftover dried plant stems from the previous year) to prevent the loss of the land's healthy top soil.

### **PRODUCTION:**

Hoola Hoops can be a great farming tool – by placing a hoola hoop on the ground, the farmer can count the number of plants inside the hoop and know whether there will be enough plants that in growing they will be able to protect themselves from weeds, and to protect the soil from blowing away.

Bright, yellow pans are sometimes placed in the fields to attract the bugs that like to eat canola plants. The more bugs in the yellow pan, the more danger that there is for the canola plants.

### **RURAL CONNECTIONS:**

Canola provides the bright canola fields that color the Alberta countryside and make visitors go 'Ah!' when they travel during the summer months.

Alberta grows about 30% of the canola planted in Canada.

Farmers can sell their canola to three crushing plants in Alberta – one in Lloydminster, another in Fort Saskatchewan, and another in Lethbridge. These plants will crush the canola seed to make canola oil.

Farmers can also sell their seed to companies that will then sell it to companies in Japan, Mexico, the United States, China or Pakistan.

**For more information go to:** [www.canola.ab.ca](http://www.canola.ab.ca).

## **COMMODITY: CHICKEN**

### **FUN FACTS:**

- chicken raised for meat are not the same type of chicken that produce table eggs;
- all Alberta producers follow the On-Farm Food Safety Assurance Program to ensure a safe, wholesome and nutritious product;
- fertilized eggs are shipped to hatcheries where the eggs are incubated and hatched into chicks;
- chicks are sold and quickly transported to poultry farms within 24 hours of being removed from their incubators;
- poultry barns are specially designed and controlled for ventilation, light and temperature;
- birds are carefully watched and kept warm during the first few weeks. As the birds grow feathers, the heat is gradually decreased in the barn;
- birds are allowed to move freely throughout the barn – cages are not used;
- birds can eat and drink at will. The poultry diet consists of cereal grains, protein and vitamin supplements. The use of growth hormones is strictly prohibited;
- mature birds are transported to a processing plant in specially equipped trucks to ensure swift and human transportation;
- after each flock of birds, the barn is totally cleaned and disinfected to prevent the spread of disease from one flock to another;
- the majority of Alberta chicken are processed at a processing plant in Edmonton, Calgary, Lethbridge, and Wembley;
- every bird is inspected for health and wholesomeness by a federal inspector;
- 80% of chicken is sold fresh (not frozen);
- Refrigerated trucks deliver fresh, processed poultry everyday to local grocery stores.

### **ENVIRONMENTAL ASPECTS:**

- Environmental Farm Plan

### **PRODUCTION:**

- there are 273 certified chicken farms (2005)
- the average farm produces 189,000 chickens/year (2005)
- approximately 115 million kilograms of chicken is produced/year (2005)
- chicken broilers are chickens weighing an average of 2.21 kg
- roasters are larger chickens weighing an average of 3.16 kg

### **RURAL CONNECTIONS:**

- Industry partners include breeders, catchers, poultry specialists, feed companies, farm suppliers, veterinarians, processors, government inspectors, stores, restaurants, hotels, foodservice customers, and hatcheries.

**For More Information** go to: [www.chicken.ab.ca](http://www.chicken.ab.ca)

**COMMODITY: DAIRY**

**Never Stop. Milk.**

**FUN FACTS:**

Holstein cows are typically black and white and originating in Holland

Holstein cows are the largest in size and the most popular breed in Canada

95% of all cows in Canada are Holstein

In a year, based on 305 milking days, an average dairy cow produces over 9,000 litres of milk that is about 30 litres a day

Milk naturally contains 87% water

A cow drinks about 100 litres (about a bathtub full) of fresh water a day

A cow is a ruminant animal. A ruminant animal is a hooved animal that chews cud. Animals like cows, sheep, goats, antelopes, and camels are ruminants.

Cows eat food that is very high in fibre. Partially chewed food forms tennis sized balls called cud.

Cows chew their cud for about 8 hours a day

Cows have four compartments to their stomachs. They are the rumen, reticulum, omasum and abomasum

It takes about 50 – 70 hours for cows to turn grass into milk

There is one dairy cow for every 22 Canadians (that's about one million cows producing milk)

There are 728 dairy producers and approximately 85,000 dairy cows in Alberta

**ENVIRONMENTAL ASPECTS:**

Responsible animal care is the number one priority of the dairy farmer. It's in the farmer's best interest to ensure that the cows are comfortable. Cows that are well cared for grow better, are healthier and produce more milk. The proper care of a dairy cow includes feeding, watering, providing shelter and monitoring their health and safety. In Alberta, the Alberta Farm Animal Care (AFAC) ensure the livestock industries work together for the responsible care of animals.

**PRODUCTION:**

In order for a cow to make milk, she must first give birth to a calf. A heifer is a young cow that has not yet had a calf. When she is about 18 months old, the dairy farmer will breed her so that she will have a calf and then start to produce milk. All cows are bred so they have a calf once a year. Most dairy cows are bred using artificial insemination (A.I.). A.I. has been used since the mid 1950's to improve the overall health and milk production of the cow. It is not stressful for the cow. A cow is pregnant for approximately 280 days (nine months). Birth is a natural process and in most cases unaided by the dairy farmer. In rare cases farmers assist the cow if she is having difficulty. When the cow's udder is full, it is time for milking. On most farms cows are milked twice a day. Raw milk is picked up and transported by a milk truck to the dairy processing plant every two days.

**RURAL CONNECTIONS:**

Some 3,000 people are employed directly by dairy producers. Dairy producers are dependent on veterinarians, auctioneers, feed companies, dairy processors, farm suppliers, animal nutritionists, grocery stores and restaurants, researchers.

**For more information go to:** [www.moo2you.ca](http://www.moo2you.ca) and [www.albertamilk.com](http://www.albertamilk.com)

## **SPONSOR: EASTERN IRRIGATION DISTRICT (EID)**

Irrigated Agriculture within EID

Cereals - 23 %; Forages - 66 %; Specialty crops and oil seeds - 11 %

Grazing Land - 240,000 hectares of grassland owned by the district and managed as community grazing pastures.

Wildlife and Fisheries Habitat

### **FUN FACTS:**

Only about 4 % of Alberta farmland is irrigated yet this irrigated land provides close to 20 % of the province's agricultural production.

The Eastern Irrigation District is the largest private landowner in Alberta.

The Eastern Irrigation District is larger than the province of Prince Edward Island by almost 10%.

The district has a close working relationship with Ducks Unlimited Canada providing water and land for over 14,000 hectares of wetlands within the EID.

Before the introduction of irrigation water there was no natural permanent water found within the boundaries of what is now the Eastern Irrigation District.

The Partners in Habitat Development (PHD) program was initiated in the EID in 1998 with over 250,000 trees and shrubs planted for wildlife habitat within the district since that time.

### **ENVIRONMENTAL ASPECTS:**

There are 600,000 hectares of land within the boundaries of the district, of which 113,000 hectares are irrigated. The remainder of the lands are grasslands used for grazing and some dryland cultivation.

The EID's water is diverted into the district from the Bow River and delivered to the farmers through a system that includes 3800 kilometers of canals, pipelines and drainage ditches and 13 internal storage reservoirs.

### **PRODUCTION:**

\$300 million annual primary agricultural production from irrigated farmland translates into \$1.35 billion in regional economic impact generated within the Eastern Irrigation District

Close to \$8 million is injected into the local economy annually from recreational use of the land and water resources found within the EID.

The EID is one of thirteen irrigation districts in Alberta and accounts for approximately 20 % of the irrigated land found within the province.

### **RURAL CONNECTIONS:**

District farmers and ranchers.

All related agricultural industries.

Wildlife habitat partners include; Brooks Fish and Game, Pheasants Forever, Ducks Unlimited, County of Newell and both the provincial and federal governments.

**For More Information go to:** [www.eid.ab.ca](http://www.eid.ab.ca)

## **COMMODITY: EGGS**

### **FUN FACTS:**

The average Canadian eats over 15 dozen (185) eggs\* a year. With many health professionals now saying “an egg a day is okay” for most people, many can “get cracking” more often!

Eggs are a healthy, nutritious food. They’re low in calories (70/egg), low in fat (5 grams/egg), high in protein and a good source of 15+ vitamins and minerals.

You can tell what a hen eats by the color of the yolk. A lemon-yellow yolk signifies wheat was the main or only grain in the hen’s diet, while a darker yellow-colored yolk indicates corn was the main or only grain in the diet.

The shell has 6000-8000 tiny pores. These allow air and flavors to pass through – a good reason for keeping eggs in their original egg carton in the fridge (to prevent any strong smells from cheeses, meats, onions, etc to affect the flavor of the eggs)!

The difference between white and brown eggs is just the breed of hen they’re from. Generally, white eggs are from white-feathered breeds, while brown eggs come from brown-feathered breeds.

### **PRODUCTION:**

Alberta has 170\* registered egg producers who care for over 1.7\* million hens, who in turn, lay about 40 million dozens (or about 480 million)\* eggs a year.

Today’s breeds of hens naturally lay an egg every 1½ days on average.

Almost all eggs produced in Alberta are enjoyed by Albertans... with even some imported to Alberta to meet consumer demand.

Eggs in the grocery store are fresh! Most eggs get from hen to store within a week.

Food safety and animal welfare are top priorities with egg producers. They work hard to ensure consumers get safe, fresh, top quality eggs.

They also do all they can to be sure the hens in their care are well looked after, for happy hens really do lay more eggs! A cage form of housing is the best known and available form of housing known to date – for food safety and humane animal care reasons. Keeping hens in close quarters meets hens’ natural instinct to be very close to one another so as to feel safe and secure. At the same time, this form of housing allows the producer to quickly collect eggs (to get them into refrigeration) as well as keep a better eye on the hens to ensure their good health and well-being.

### **ENVIRONMENTAL CONNECTIONS:**

Eggs are environmentally-friendly. Eat the egg itself and compost the eggshell. Even reuse or recycle the packaging (i.e. egg cartons) for everything from crafts and containers for growing plant seedlings to storage container for small items.

### **RURAL CONNECTIONS:**

Alberta’s egg industry helps ensure a strong rural Alberta, by providing jobs – directly and indirectly – as well as by reinvesting in their communities and rural economy.

\*2004 and 2005 statistics

**For More Information go to:** [www.eggs.ab.ca](http://www.eggs.ab.ca)

## **COMMODITY: POTATO**

### **FUN FACTS:**

Inca Indians in Peru were the first to cultivate potatoes in 200 BC

Potatoes are the most popular vegetable grown. One potato provides 45% of our daily needs of Vitamin C plus they are high in Potassium, Magnesium, Vitamin B6 and Niacin.

Marie Antoinette wife of Louis xv was known to wear potato blossoms in her hair as decoration.

French Fries were invented in the early 1800's when they were served to US President Thomas Jefferson while he was in President of the USA.

In 1995 the potato was the first vegetable to be grown in space when NASA and the Univ. of Wisconsin partnered to create technology with the goal of feeding astronauts on long space voyages.

In 1535 Spanish Conquistadors conquered Peru and brought the potato to Europe.

In Ireland the potato was a major food source. In 1845 the potato crop was destroyed by a disease and the potato crop was wiped out causing the disaster of the Irish Potato Famine.

The first potato patches in North America most likely were planted in New Hampshire around 1719.

During the Alaskan Gold Rush (1897-1898) potatoes were practically worth their weight in gold. Because of their Vitamin C content the miners traded gold for potatoes.

### **PRODUCTION:**

2005 51,000 acres /20,900 hectares

Number of potato farms in Alberta over 5 acres: 155 farms

Farm Gate Value: \$140 million+

Employment: 2000+ people on farms and processing

Trade: Frozen potato products, potato chips, flakes, table stock and seed potatoes

### **ENVIRONMENTAL ASPECTS:**

Potatoes are a 4 year rotation crop to keep spread of disease low. They need a regular supply of water to grow which makes them a good fit for Southern Alberta where we have irrigation systems to bring water down from the mountains each spring through an irrigation system of lakes and canals.

Our high altitude and low humidity along with cool nights are very helpful in keeping all of our potato plants healthy.

### **RURAL CONNECTIONS:**

Processing potatoes are mostly grown in Southern Alberta and seed potatoes are mostly grown in the Lacombe and Edmonton areas. Fresh market table potatoes are grown on smaller farms spread out through-out the province.

Potatoes have been grown in Alberta since the early 1900's and were always a staple food for most families. They were cheap to buy and very nutritious. Even today they are promoted as a low fat, healthy food choice. They are the comfort food we remember from eating around Mom's dinner table.

**For More Information go to:**

[www.albertapotatoes.ca](http://www.albertapotatoes.ca)

## **COMMODITY    Pulses (Peas, Lentils, Drybeans, Fababeans, and Chickpeas)**

### **FUN FACTS**

- Pulse is a Latin word meaning the dried edible seeds of legumes.
- When farmers seed pulse crops, they use less fertilizer because pulses can fix nitrogen from the air (great for eliminating greenhouse gases).
- Pulses leave extra nitrogen for the following crops. This leads to better quality, yields of rotational crops.
- Pulses help build the quality and productivity of the soil.
- 75% of peas is marketed as livestock feed (majority of this is exported)
- 25% of peas is marketed as human food (largest export market is India)
- ½ of the pigs in Alberta are fed peas
- all lentils and dry beans are exported as human food
- Pulses have high fibre and are low in fat content. They are very healthy for you, as well as, for diabetics and people with heart conditions. Pulses also provide an alternative for people with wheat allergies.

### **ENVIRONMENTAL ASPECTS**

Pulses play a key role in improving soil quality.  
Pulses enhance and improve the soil bio-diversity.  
Pulses reduce the dependency on chemical fertilizers.

### **PRODUCTION**

- It is estimated that pulse production returns approximately \$125 million farm-gate to agriculture in Alberta.
- Approximately 750,000 acres
- Alberta producers - approximately 4,500
- Numerous private and coop grain buyers, traders, and processors.

### **RURAL CONNECTIONS**

Manitoba Pulse Growers Association, Saskatchewan Pulse Crop Development Board, Ontario Bean Producers, Canadian Special Crops Association

Governments            - Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development (provincial)  
                                  - Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (federal)

Private industry        - buyers, local processors, input suppliers, machinery dealers, transportation,  
                                  etc.

Pulse Canada            - look for trade partners' world wide.

**For More Information go to:**            [www.pulse.ab.ca](http://www.pulse.ab.ca)

## **COMMODITY      SUGAR BEET**

### **FUN FACTS**

only 8% of domestic consumption is supplied by beet sugar produced in Canada  
8 kg of sugar beet produces 1 kg of sugar  
chemical formula: C 12 H 22 O 11

### **PRODUCTION**

- Number of farms involved in Alberta is over 400

**Employment:** Over 400 farm units - 530 full time equivalent jobs directly. Sugar factory: full time 115 employees; part time 273 employees. Several hundred part-time employees in trucking, farm labor, etc. Support to service industries (banking, accounting, etc.).

**Trade:** Approximately 11,000 tonnes of refined sugar exported to U.S.A.

**Contribution:** \$60-\$80 million revenue annually split between farmers and factory

### **ENVIRONMENTAL ASPECTS**

20 inches of precipitation in one growing season is required to produce sugar beets, and therefore it is necessary to supplement rainfall with irrigation.

Sugar beets are grown in a four-year rotation to break the disease cycle. Canola cannot be used as a complementary rotational crop as it hosts some of the same diseases. Rotational crops that can be used are potatoes, pulses and cereals.

Weed control in sugar beet production can be a challenge as there are a limited number of herbicides that can be used for broadleaf weed control. Uncontrolled weeds in the early growing season can compete with the tiny sugar beet seedlings reducing crop production.

### **RURAL CONNECTIONS**

- Rogers Sugar Ltd., implement dealers, casual labor, seed and chemical suppliers, truckers
- white collar service industries
- food processing companies

**For More Information go to:**      [www.absugar.ab](http://www.absugar.ab)

## **SPONSOR – Alberta Veterinary Medical Association**

### **FUN FACTS:**

- Veterinarians ensure that animals are healthy and happy. There are close to 1,000 veterinarians working in over 400 veterinary hospitals in Alberta. Over 157 of those hospitals are directly involved with livestock agriculture.

### **ENVIRONMENTAL ASPECTS:**

- Veterinarians provide a comprehensive range of services that prevent problems with the health of livestock which in turn keeps the environment safe of disease and contamination. Many serious diseases can be prevented with an optimum disease prevention program. Each herd's requirements are unique, and require a customized program that a veterinarian can help to develop. Internal and external parasites including the irritation of face and horn flies pose significant problems in cattle herds. The parasites vary from area to area and control programs are customized by veterinarians for individual situations.
- Laboratory services are provided by veterinarians to help diagnose medical problems quickly and efficiently. A post mortem is carried out by veterinarians to determine the cause of death, and allow the producer to determine if the death could have been prevented, or if it poses a disease threat to the rest of the herd and perhaps contamination of the environment. Veterinarians are responsible for the appropriate disposal of dead animals so as not to contaminate the environment.

### **PRODUCTION:**

- Recent studies show that animals that are treated humanely are better producers. Veterinarians are active in animal welfare, participating in organizations such as the Animal Farm Animal Care Association (AFAC) and the Alberta Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA).
- Managing the overall health of a herd can often be the difference between a marginal operation and a highly successful one. Veterinarians offer comprehensive management services and advice about: Early Pregnancy Diagnosis, Bull Evaluations, Calf Scours Prevention, Nutrition, Herd Record Keeping and Data Analysis, Disease Prevention, Implant Programs, Parasite and Pest Control, and Selection Assistance with the purchasing of animals.

### **RURAL CONNECTIONS:**

- Alberta veterinary hospitals provide 24-hour service for all patients. When an emergency occurs, the farmer will receive a quick response and an accurate diagnosis will be provided when he or she has a regular working relationship established with a veterinarian. Many people living and working in the rural areas of Alberta have close connections with their veterinarian.

**For More Information go to:**

[www.avma.ab.ca](http://www.avma.ab.ca)

## **SPONSORING GROUPS**

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