

COMMODITY

FORAGE

Description

Forage crops are grown throughout British Columbia in support of various livestock enterprises, including dairy, beef and sheep. They include a wide range of annual and perennial grasses and legumes grown for hay, silage and pasture. Major species include alfalfa, red and white clover, timothy, orchardgrass, tall fescue, corn and the cereals, wheat, barley and oats.

The vast majority of forage crop production is fed on the farm or ranch where it is grown although small amounts are traded among farmers, from farmers to feed companies for resale, and some is even exported out of the province, primarily to Alaska. Significant quantities of hay, mainly alfalfa, are imported to the South Coastal Region from Washington State, Alberta and the BC interior to support the dairy industry.

Forage producers use such farm equipment as tractors, trucks, manure spreaders and harvesters. They need access to irrigation water. Farm infrastructure includes irrigation equipment and lines, barns, hay sheds and silos. Forage producers may use manure and fertilizer to increase and improve production as well as pesticides to control weeds and insects.

Farm Practices of Particular Interest

Practices for specific farm activities can be found in the Farm Practice section of this reference guide. Farm practices that are of particular interest to forage production include:

Cultivation

Some forage crops are annual and require annual cultivation for reseeding which may result in blowing dust.

See Farm Practice: [Cultivation](#)

Harvesting

Harvesting of forage crops is very weather and time sensitive. Equipment may have to be operated early in the morning or late at night. Dry crops may release dust as well.

See Farm Practice: [Mobile Equipment](#)

Nutrient Management

Crops require nutrients to grow. Soil conditioners, inorganic fertilizers and manure are often applied. Usually the applications are made during normal work hours unless the weather or seeding constraints are present. Whenever possible, choose calm days to spread dusty materials such as lime. Manure spreading will release odours.

See Farm Practice: [Fertilizers and Soil Conditioners](#)
[Manure Storage and Use](#)

Pesticide Application

Forage crops generally are sprayed far less frequently than vegetable or fruit crops. The most common application is herbicides to control weeds in forage corn. Timing of pesticide application is often critical to success.

See Farm Practice: [Pesticides](#)

Water Management

Drainage and irrigation are very important in many regions to optimize forage production. Tractor powered pumps are noise issues. Avoid creating disturbances for your neighbours when you irrigate or drain your own property. Excess irrigation in an area of coarse soils may result in drainage problems in locations at lower elevations where the water may surface.

See Farm Practice: [Drainage](#)
[Irrigation](#)
[Stormwater Management](#)

Legislation

Agricultural producers are expected to follow all legislation that pertains to their farming operation. The *Farm Practices Protection (Right to Farm) Act* stipulates that the farm operation must meet the *Health Act*, *Pesticide Control Act*, *Waste Management Act* and the regulations under those acts. Information on federal and provincial legislation can be found in Appendices B and C.

Acts that pertain to specific farm activities are listed in the farm practices section of this reference guide. Local government bylaws may also apply to some farm practices. Acts that are not referenced elsewhere that are of special interest to forage producers include the following:

Federal

[Fisheries Act](#) – protects fish and fish habitat

Provincial

[Pesticide Control Act](#) – regulates sale, purchase, storage and use of pesticides

[Weed Control Act](#) – places responsibility for the control of noxious weeds on land occupiers

[Motor Vehicle Act](#) – protects people travelling on public roads

Local Government

Applicable *Noise Control Bylaws*.

Publications

Publications that provide information on forage production include, but are not limited to, the following (refer to Appendix D for details):

Advanced Forage Management

British Columbia Environmental Farm Plan Reference Guide

Nutrient Management