

**BC Fruit Growers' Association
Friday File**



July 24, 2015

Starling Program

Last week, we noted that starling populations appear to be very low this summer. However, we are assuming that this is a temporary relief from this invasive, damaging pest. The Starling Control Program continues to employ trappers and conduct research on starling population movement.

Your input is requested to help us improve the Starling Control Program. By completing a survey, you will help us better understand the needs and best ways to control Starlings. Here is a link to the Survey on Starling Damage and Control:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/QWH8TZS>

Labour

A reminder that workers in the SAWP program need to obtain a Social Insurance Number (SIN) directly from Service Canada. Growers are encouraged to bring their workers to the local office in Kelowna or Penticton, or to call or email their MP's office to arrange a Service Canada representative to attend your farm:

Ron Cannan, M.P. Kelowna Lake Country Email : ron@cannan.ca	Dan Albas, M.P. Okanagan Coquihala Email: Dan.albas@parl.gc.ca	Alex Atamanenko, M.P. Southern Interior Email: Alex.Atamanenko@parl.gc.ca
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* In normal circumstances, SIN numbers should be obtained within three days of starting work. *

Water

A break in the weather this weekend may help firefighters battling the forest fires in BC, but is not expected to improve water supplies much. An update on the Okanagan situation is being held by the Okanagan Basin Water Board on Monday and an update will be provided in next week's Friday File.



BCFGA
BC LABOUR PROJECT

Ron Forrest, Facilitator
(250) 859-7503
rforrest.bcfga@gmail.com

WORKSHOPS! **EMPLOYMENT!**

Summerland Varieties Corporation and the BCFGa Research and Development Orchard Ltd. provide funding for the BCFGa Labour Project - thank you to these BCFGa subsidiaries for supporting growers.



Replant Update

The first two 2015 Replant projects recommended for payment have been sent to the province this week, with additional projects to follow. As well, a second round of project approvals for the 2015 Program are being considered by the province.

For 2015, there were more Replant applications than funding. The BCFGa has requested additional funding for the 2015 Replant Program.

WorkSafeBC Rates

WorkSafeBC adjusts rates for industry sectors each year. If there are more claims than premiums paid into the system, then rates go up. If there are fewer claims than premiums, then rates go down.

The 2015 WorkSafeBC rate for the tree fruit sector remained relatively low, at \$1.73 per \$1,000 of payroll. The 2016 WorkSafeBC rate is likely to stay the same, as claims continue to be fairly low in the industry.

An individual farm rate may be adjusted for 'experience' - higher if there are injuries involving wage losses on the farm.

Across all industries, claim rates are at a near historic low. Injury rates declined consistently from 3.86 to 2.27 injuries per 100 person years of employment from the year 2000 to 2015.

Average claims cost is down. Cross-industry duration of claim has reduced from an average of 61.3 to 54.6 days per claim over the past 3 years. WorkSafeBC feels that further improvement could be made in ensuring that workers return to work sooner, by getting the worker appropriate health care and also by offering workers alternative jobs that can be performed as they recover.

The Farm and Ranch Safety Agency can provide you with more information on accident prevention and return to work. There is also a “Certificate of Recognition” Program (COR), in which growers can improve health and safety practices and planning, and obtain a reduction in WorkSafeBC rates. FARSHA can explain the benefits and help implement a COR program on your farm. If you are interested, call FARSHA’s Okanagan consultant Carol Reid 250-215-5293.

Did you know?

Workers Compensation programs originated about 100 years ago in Germany to protect employers from the financial risk of being sued by injured workers. The program pooled the risk between all employers.

Currently, the WorkSafeBC role is preventing workplace injury and insuring the risk of workplace injury.

Farm Practices Protection Act Review

The BC Ministry of Agriculture has initiated a review of the Right to Farm Program. The program is composed of the Farm Practices Protection Act, which prevents neighbours from taking farmers to court over “nuisance” complaints, which technically means noise, odour and dust impacts of farming. Only ‘normal’ farm practices are protected, however.

Another aspect of the Right to Farm Program is the ability of the Minister of Agriculture to ‘regulate’ a municipality’s use of bylaws that restrict farming practices. Farms can still be regulated through general (applicable to any business) bylaws on noise, for example. However, farm-specific by-laws would be subject to the Agriculture Minister’s approval if the municipality is regulated. A municipality can ask to be regulated in order to obtain the extra advice and resources of the Ministry of Agriculture. Kelowna and Abbotsford asked to be regulated to get help with feedlot and mushroom composting odour issues. The Minister can intervene in municipalities where agriculture bylaws are being imposed - Delta and Langley are regulated due to their introduction of bylaws on greenhouses and mushroom composting.

Tools that can be used to protect farm practices include agricultural awareness, boundary buffers and set-backs for development when bordering farms, municipal use of Agricultural Area Plans and Agriculture Advisory Committees, use of “Smart Growth” principles (densify instead of expanding into farm areas), introduction of ‘By-Law Standards by the Minister of Agriculture, and use of Regional Agrologists to provide information and work with municipalities.

The review is expected to have another round of farm organization consultation in early Fall.

