

BC Fruit Growers' Association

Friday File

July 21, 2017



Mexican Consulate

Farm Visits

The Mexican Consulate is currently visiting farms with Mexican workers from the Seasonal Agricultural Work Program. The Mexican Consulate will interview the grower and the workers, separately, to ensure that the program standards and the Mexican Consulate's expectations are being met.

Proper payment of wages and safe work conditions are primary areas of concern to the Mexican Consulate. The Mexican Consulate also inspects farm worker housing. While it is the worker's responsibility to ensure the tidiness and cleanliness of the housing (it is the workers living space), the Consulate will often address deficiencies in housekeeping with the grower.

An appropriate response is to let the Mexican Consulate know what instructions you have given the workers to keep their living space tidy and clean, and additionally that the workers inform you within a day of any repairs that are needed to the worker housing. If you are able to clearly let the Consulate know what communication you have had with the workers, then the Consulate may offer to re-enforce these house rules.

Housing quality is also a key concern of the Consulate. In the Spring, some poor quality worker housing has been reported in the news media. As a result, travel trailers will not be allowed for SAWP housing in future. Workcamp housing (ATCO-type trailers) are accepted, and information on a business associate member is included in this newsletter, so that BCFGA members have a source of adequate housing.

The Consulate's communication with farms may sometimes seem to be abrupt and inconsiderate - this is usually a response of the Consulate to what it perceives as poor treatment of its citizens (and sometimes growers in the middle of the season are rushed and under pressure and may not be at their most 'communicative!'). The BCFGA recommends that growers respond with fact and detail and address the issue directly.

You may seek to address issues by communicating effectively with the Consulate and workers, as follows:

- Get agreement on the nature of the issue. Define the issue the Consulate perceives precisely.
 - For example, the consulate may be concerned that a missing window screen allows mosquitoes and insects into the living area.
 - The grower may note that the screen was previously removed for cleaning and broken, or that the screen was in place at the start of the season and there is no known reason for it to be missing.
- Discuss the issue and possible solutions.
 - In this example, replacement of the screen is the solution, and a timeframe could be set for the purchase and installation of the screen.

It is important to follow-through on the solution, if it is an item identified for either the worker, the Consulate, or the grower to take action. Another example could be garbage bags left outside of the living area. The grower may have left instructions that no garbage is to be left in or around the living area, and that all garbage is to be immediately placed in garbage bins available to the workers. In this case the solution is that the Consulate talk to the workers about the importance of the living area. Another solution, if the grower considers it reasonable, may be the purchase of additional garbage bins.

If you have “house rules” that the worker housing at the end of the season is to be left clean and in the same good repair as at the start of the season, and if there is proof that the housing is not clean or there are items that have been broken by the workers, then the Consulate may approve withholding of payroll at the end of the season to pay for cleaning and repairs. It is critical that the grower not take deductions without the written approval of the Consulate.

It is a good practice to give the workers “house rules”, in a written note, regarding your expectations for housekeeping, notification of the need for repair and maintenance, and condition that the housing is expected to meet at the end of the season. It is also good practice to take some photos of the housing prior to the arrival of the workers, so that there is evidence of the cleanliness and maintenance of the housing. The Consulate has offered to translate the “house rules” into Spanish, where needed. [Here is an example of “house rules”](#) provided by the Consulate.

If you need help communicating with the Mexican Consulate, contact BCFGAs General Manager Glen Lucas at 250-212-8828 or BCFGAs Vice-President Pinder Dhaliwal at 250-490-7198.

The BCFGA Labour Orientation and Safety Program

Contact Ron Forrest

250-859-7503

Email: rforrest.bcfga@gmail.com

Kiliad Industrial Ltd.

New BCFGA Business Associate Member

The BCFGA offers Business Associate Membership. These business members support the industry by paying an annual fee to the BCFGA. The benefit to the business is the BCFGA making its members aware of the commercial offerings of the business. This week, the business member being highlighted is Kiliad Industrial Ltd.

Kiliad Industrial Ltd has been supplying agricultural workforce accommodations in BC since 2013. Kiliad's focus is on providing cost-effective portable buildings that comply with SAWP requirements, and can set up and service turn-key systems for any amount of workers required.

Kiliad has extensive experience with many Okanagan farms in installing worker housing and specializes in:

- Used workcamp (ATCO-like) trailers.
- Custom-built worker housing.

Currently, there is a large stock of used workcamps, sourced from Alberta. The trailers are renovated, furnished including central vacuum, propane tanks, washer/dryer, and living quarters furnishings.

Kiliad specializes in sourcing, installing and servicing (repairing, relocating) the trailers. For more information on how Kiliad can help with your worker housing needs, contact Russ Schartner at 250-575-5310.

Employment Standards

Farm Visits

The Employment Standards Branch regulates payment of wages. A team from the Employment Standards Branch visited farms in the Okanagan in July, and the team has now completed its fieldwork. The Employment Standards team may have requested payroll records as a follow-up to their on-site visit to a farm.

The branch reports "All farm owners and supervisors were receptive and cooperative with the team and we look forward to inspecting all the payroll records once received." [Here is an information note](#) that highlights the farm payroll rules that the Employment Standards Branch regulates.

Student Bursaries

Student alert!

The deadline for the Golden Jubilee Bursary and the Joe Sardinha Memorial Bursary (both \$1,000) is **August 31, 2017**.

If you have a student entering into their second year at university or college, [here is information on how to apply](#).

Meetings and Events - check the [BCFGA Calendar](#) on our website for more information

Date	Meeting	
July 25-26	CHC Apple Working Group	Fred Steele and Glen Lucas
August 28	BCFGA Executive	
Aug 30 - Sept 2	Interior Provincial Exhibition	Visit us at our booth

How to contact the BCFGa Office

BCFGA Office - 250-762-5226 Toll free -1-800-619-9022 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Brenda Jorde, Member Services and Replant Admin, local 1.• Glen Lucas, General Manager, local 2.• Bunvir Nijjer, Corporate Secretary and Seasonal Agriculture Worker Program, local 4.
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Farm Practices

Message from Anne Skinner, Regional Agrologist BC Ministry of Agriculture

Guidelines for use of Audible Bird Scare Devices: Ministry of Agriculture & City of Kelowna have been inundated with complaints. Farm Practices Protection supports the standard use of these devices when the guidelines are followed:

- Single shot devices should not be firing more than once every 5 min. Firing every 45 sec is not an acceptable farm practice.

It's not easy to determine who is responsible for every device, particularly if the owner doesn't live at the orchard, so apologies if you received a note on your door & you aren't the culprit. If you have questions about appropriate use please call Anne Skinner @ Ministry of Agriculture 250-861-7272. Thanks. Much appreciated.