

POLICY # AG 016
Weed and Vegetation Management

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| APPROVAL DATE: | May 1995 | CROSS-REFERENCE: | Replaces policies AG 007 – Roadside Brush Control, AG 009 - Roadside Weed Concerns, AG 010 – Private Land Spraying, AG 011 – Mowing Grass in Subdivisions, AG 012 – No Spray Zones, AG 017 – Roadside Haying Agreement |
| RESPONSIBILITY: | Agriculture & Environment | | |
| APPROVER: | Council | APPENDICES: | No Spray Agreement; Roadside Hay Permit Agreement |
| REVISION DATE (s): | March 6, 2019; March 12, 2019 | REVIEW DATE: | January 2024 |

POLICY STATEMENT

To establish the way in which the programs related to roadside brush, vegetation management and weed control are administered in the County of Vermilion River.

BACKGROUND

Alberta's Weed Control Act and Weed Control Regulation are designed to regulate the spread of prohibited noxious and noxious weed infestations. The County of Vermilion River is responsible for developing and delivering a weed control program in the County under the authority of the Weed Control Act.

The Weed Control Act requires municipalities to appoint inspectors to enforce and monitor compliance within the municipality. As such, it is the responsibility of the County to control noxious weeds and eradicate prohibited noxious weeds on County lands.

The County of Vermilion River is also responsible for the maintenance and repair of municipal roadways and ensuring public safety when using municipal roadways. The County's vegetation management program controls the growth of Woody Vegetation and Tall Vegetation along

County roadsides to reduce snow accumulation concerns, facilitate snow removal, enhance road maintenance, increase traffic safety by reducing obstructions in the ditch and improve visibility along roadways and at intersections. Vegetation management is an integral part of maintaining an effective drainage system. Vegetation management also reduces the spread of pests and diseases along municipal roadways (i.e. clubroot of canola, black knot fungus).

Most weed control depends on the growth stage of the weeds and surrounding vegetation (i.e. nearby crops) as well as weather conditions. These factors are highly variable and when considered along with thousands of miles of roadsides in the County, make vegetation management challenging. Using Herbicides that are longer lasting, residual and less selective in a systematic Blanket Spray operation improves effectiveness of vegetation control. The road right of way is not designed for ease of operating equipment such as sprayers within the ditch area. Thus, effective vegetation management is limited by conditions including width of Right of Way, back slope, fences, crops, trees, water bodies, wind and weather.

OBJECTIVES

- Minimize the spread of invasive plant species listed under the Weed Control Act.
- Establish a fair and consistent approach to weed and vegetation control, enforcement and services.
- Create a co-operative, long term solution for weed concerns on roadsides and private lands.
- Preserve the productivity of agricultural lands.
- Provide safe right of way along County roads.
- Reduce the cost of road maintenance and upgrading.
- Compliment adjacent agricultural land.
- Control the growth of woody vegetation and tall vegetation including sweetclover and alfalfa along County road right of ways.
- To reduce the spread of crop diseases along municipal roadways such as clubroot in canola.

SCOPE

| INTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS | EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Council | Ratepayers |
| Administration | General Public |

DEFINITIONS

Agricultural herbicide is herbicide designated on the label for weed control on agricultural crops and livestock feed.

Alfalfa is *Medicago sativa*, *M. falcata*, and *M. sativa* spp. *varia*, perennial legumes widely grown for hay and forage.

Blanket Spray is to treat the entire shoulder of the road with a selective herbicide where large infestations of undesirable plants are present or the intended goal is to leave residual herbicide to stop emergence of undesirable plants in the near future.

Brush is any tree or shrub growing along the roadside that is less than two (2) meters in height.

Clubroot (*Plasmodiophora brassicae*) is a serious soil-borne disease of crucifer crops such as canola.

County is the County of Vermilion River.

County Vegetation Management Standards is the County of Vermilion River's "Standard for Management of Weeds and Brush on Municipal Roadsides".

Designated weeds are those weeds listed on the Weed Control Regulation or designated as a noxious or prohibited noxious weed by the County of Vermilion River.

Dugouts are man-made small fresh water storage reservoirs.

Herbicide is a substance that is toxic to plants, used to destroy unwanted vegetation.

Herbicide Trespass is the application of herbicide on an area other than the intended site of application or use.

Hydro Axing is a method of removing trees and shrubs.

Industrial herbicide is herbicide designated on the label for weed control on industrial areas, including roadsides, right of ways, powerlines, pipelines, easements and industrial grounds.

Maintained Tame Shelterbelts are those where the owner or occupant has mowed or otherwise restricted vegetation growth between the trees and the roadside.

Maintained Yard Sites are those where the owner or occupant has mowed or otherwise restricted vegetation growth along the roadside.

Noxious Weed(s) are as defined in the *Weed Control Act*, SA 2008 cW-5.1 including any amendments made thereto and includes weeds designated by the County of Vermilion River.



Prohibited Noxious Weed(s) are as defined in the *Weed Control Act*, SA 2008 cW-5.1 including any amendments made thereto and includes weeds designated by the County of Vermilion River.

Residents are persons residing within the County of Vermilion River boundary.

Right of way is the portion of the roadway that lies between the center line of the road and the boundary of the property line of the Owner's land.

Roadside is the land between the edge of the road surface and the edge of the public right of way. In lieu of no road top, roadside would encompass the entire public right of way.

Selective Herbicide is a herbicide that kills specific unwanted plants while leaving desirable vegetation relatively unharmed.

Sweet Clover is (*Melilotus officinalis* and *M. alba*), an annual or biennial legume.

Tall Vegetation is vegetation growth tall enough to reduce visibility of/in the roadside.

Tame Shelterbelts are a line(s) of trees or shrubs planted and managed to protect an area.

Unforeseen Circumstances are unanticipated circumstances not seen or known beforehand.

Weeds are noxious or prohibited noxious weeds as designated by the Weed Control Regulation.

Weed Control Act is the *Weed Control Act* SA 2008 cW-5.1 including any amendments made thereto.

Woody Vegetation is brush, shrubs or trees.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

ROADSIDE WEED AND BRUSH CONTROL

The County is divided into three (3) spray zones with a three (3) year rotational spray program in place. All road allowances within the designated zone are managed such that spraying covers the entire County every three years. The County uses equipment suitable for weed and brush control on the road allowance, along headland and fence lines adjacent to roadsides.

Roadside weed control is designed to minimize the spread of noxious and prohibited noxious weeds on County lands and preserve the productivity of agricultural land. Comparatively, brush and vegetation control is designed to minimize the growth of woody vegetation and tall vegetation to ensure the safe right of way along County roadways and enhance road maintenance.

The following guiding principles apply to Roadside Weed and Brush Control:

- The County is responsible for the appointment of Weed Inspectors.
- Residents are responsible for the control of weeds, brush and tall vegetation on either side of their maintained yard site, maintained tame shelterbelt or dugout.
- Municipal spraying within maintained yard sites and maintained tame shelterbelts will only be done with written permission from the landowner/occupant.
- The County annually inspects all roadsides for designated weeds.
- Brush mulching is initiated as required by the County's Public Works Department.
- All regrowth from County brushing, hydro axing or other mechanical removal is sprayed within two years where possible.
- Appropriate herbicides are used to control brush, tall vegetation and weeds in roadsides.
- The target application area is from edge of the road to fence line.
- Herbicide is selected by the Agriculture Fieldman.
- Ensure herbicide trespass onto farmland with industrial herbicides is avoided.
- The vegetation management program is advertised seasonally.
- Designated County roadsides are mowed once per season beginning on July 15 unless unforeseen circumstances arise. Priority is given to high traffic roads and school bus routes.
- Designated roadsides receive a minimum of a three (3) meter shoulder cut where possible. Grass and vegetation is mowed to a height not to exceed twenty (20) centimeters above the ground where possible.
- The County mows unmaintained county owned roadsides and county owned property within subdivisions as part of the roadside mowing program.

NO SPRAY ZONE AGREEMENT

Objectives

The County of Vermilion River recognizes that some landowners do not want herbicides for vegetation management applied to the municipal road right of ways adjacent to their property.

The signed No Spray Agreement between the County and the landowner offers residents the opportunity to opt out of roadside spraying adjacent to property they occupy, and by way of an annual agreement, assume the vegetation control responsibilities within that specified area.

Policy

- The County of Vermilion River will enter into a No Spray Agreement with landowners for a period one year. Applications must be received annually by the deadline.
- By signing the No Spray Agreement, the landowner accepts full responsibility for eradicating prohibited noxious weeds, controlling noxious weeds and controlling brush and tall vegetation along the County roadside adjacent to their property from the centre line of the road to the boundary of the property line. The right of way must be maintained by June 15 of each year and maintained through the growing season. All weed and brush must be maintained to County Vegetation Management Standards.
- Implementation details are provided in the County of Vermilion River No Spray Agreement.
- The County reserves the right to reject applications if immediate need of vegetation control means it is not in the County's best interest to avoid herbicide application for that season.
- If a No Spray Zone is not being maintained to County Vegetation Management Standards and/or by the date required by the agreement, the County may apply herbicides or use any other means to control weeds, brush and/or tall vegetation.
- When a hazard is caused by vegetation growth within a No Spray Zone, the County may take action to remove the hazard without notice or delay. The County may, at its option, apply herbicides or use any other acceptable means to control weeds or brush.
- The No Spray Zone or any other part of the municipal roadside shall not be used as a buffer zone for Organic operations.

ROADSIDE HAY AGREEMENT

Objectives

The County recognizes that some landowners wish to harvest hay along municipal roadside ditches adjacent to their property. The County would like to accommodate these requests where it does not interfere with County operations.

The Roadside Hay Agreement establishes the procedure allowing haying to occur on County municipal roadsides with minimal impact on municipal operations and activities.

Timeline for requests is set to provide sufficient time for administration to compile a list/map of requests granted prior to carrying out that year's Roadside Vegetation Control Program (mowing and spraying).

Policy

- The County of Vermilion River will enter into a Roadside Hay Agreement with ratepayers for the period of May 1 to July 15. Applications must be received annually by the stated deadline.
- The County agrees to delay herbicide application until July 15 along the permitted roadsides, providing a Roadside Haying Agreement has been signed.
- Hay must be cut, baled and bales removed by July 15.
- Implementation details are provided in the County of Vermilion River Roadside Hay Agreement.
- Roadside Hay Agreements may be cancelled at any time by the County in circumstances where road or roadside management takes a priority. No liability or obligation will be incurred by the County.
- When a hazard is caused by vegetation growth within a Roadside Hay Agreement, the County may take action to remove the hazard without notice or delay. The County may, at its option, apply herbicides or use any other acceptable means to control weeds or brush.
- The County reserves the right to refuse to enter into this agreement with any landowner.

PRIVATE LAND WEED CONTROL

Objectives

The spread of prohibited noxious and noxious weeds is a threat to productivity of crop lands and pastures, as well as having negative impacts on riparian and other natural areas.

The Weed Control Act and Weed Regulation of Alberta are designed to destroy or control the spread of prohibited noxious and noxious weed infestations through regulatory means.

The objective of the County of Vermilion River is to carry out a Weed Control program, under the authority of the Weed Control Act, and to prevent the spread and establishment of designated weeds on private and public lands.

Policy

- Responsibility for control of weeds on private land will at all times rest with the owner or occupant as per the Weed Control Act.
- It is the responsibility of the County to control weeds on county land, and to enforce the Weed Control Act on private land.

- The County shall appoint and hire a sufficient number of Weed Inspectors to enforce the Weed Control Act.
- The County will conduct weed inspections on private land in response to complaints as they arise.
- The County will conduct general weed inspections as time and manpower permits.
- A co-operative approach for weed control between land holders and the County will be used to resolve weed concerns where possible. However, the Weed Control Act clearly states that weed control activities are to be conducted by the property owner or occupant.
- If a mutually agreeable approach between land holders and the County cannot be reached, at the discretion of the Agriculture Fieldman, the County of Vermilion River may issue and enforce weed notices for prohibited noxious weeds and noxious weeds that are a concern in the County.
- The County may make bylaws designating a plant as a noxious weed or a prohibited noxious weed and designating noxious weeds as prohibited noxious weeds within the municipality.

PRIVATE LAND SPRAYING

Objectives

Specific prohibited noxious and noxious weeds like common tansy (*Tanacetum vulgare*), leafy spurge (*Euphorbia escula*) and toadflax (*Linaria vulgaris*) are hard to control and ratepayers may not have ready access to herbicides and equipment to control these problem weeds.

Policy

- The County of Vermilion River will assist ratepayers in eradicating prohibited noxious weeds on private land by providing manpower, equipment and herbicide at no charge where possible.
- The County of Vermilion River will assist ratepayers in controlling noxious weeds on private land by providing manpower and equipment where possible.
- The ASB will provide herbicide for the control of noxious weeds up to \$100.00. (**Motion # ASB 7-04-98**) The ratepayer will reimburse the County for any herbicide used over the \$100.00.
- Administration will maintain a list of ratepayers requesting private land spraying. When equipment and manpower become available, administration will contact ratepayers on the above list and offer private land spraying services. The ASB primary program of



roadside weed control and brush spraying shall be the ASB first priority. Private land spraying will be offered to ratepayers when manpower and equipment become available.

- Spraying done on private land in accordance with a Weed Notice shall be exempt from having manpower, equipment and herbicide provided free of charge.

ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

| ROLE/TASK | TITLE (s) OF PERSON RESPONSIBLE |
|---|---|
| HANDLING INQUIRIES | Director of Agriculture and Environment |
| MONITORING REVIEWS AND REVISIONS | Executive Secretary |
| IMPLEMENTING POLICY | Council |
| COMMUNICATING POLICY | Chief Administrative Officer |