

ACCEPTING SOIL ONTO AGRICULTURAL LAND



FACT SHEET

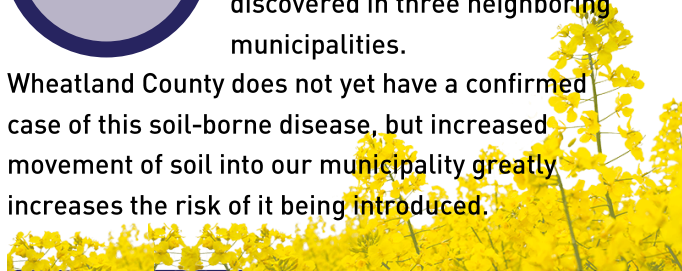
As high rates of development occur west of our County, excess soil is being offered to landowners. This fact sheet outlines risks associated with accepting such soil onto agricultural lands and methods of mitigating them, and is intended to help support Wheatland County's agricultural producers in protecting themselves and their neighbors from any unforeseen consequences that may occur.

Risk Areas

CLUBROOT

Regulated under the Agricultural Pests Act for its ability to have devastating effects on cruciferous crops like canola, clubroot has been discovered in three neighboring municipalities.

Wheatland County does not yet have a confirmed case of this soil-borne disease, but increased movement of soil into our municipality greatly increases the risk of it being introduced.



The quality of soil

offered by companies looking to haul to agricultural lands will not always meet a standard expected by the farmer. Soil quality issues associated with this type of soil transfer include low organic matter content, high clay content, salinity, rocks, and garbage.

SOIL QUALITY

The potential movement of weed infestations into or throughout the County through bulk soil transfer is a cause for concern. Weeds cause economic and biodiversity losses, affecting our agricultural



community. Depending on the type of weed and severity of an infestation when found, weeds can be very difficult to eradicate. Early detection and response is critical.

WEEDS

Where the objective of placing bulk soil is to improve drainage or reduce standing water, landowners must be aware of potential impacts to neighbours and rules that apply to this activity. Displaced water can flood or damage other properties, and landowners may be reported by public passersby for potentially unauthorized activities leading to regulatory problems for the landowner.

DRAINAGE

Producers must be vigilant when accepting any bulk soil onto agricultural lands to ensure that productivity is not impacted and weeds and pests are not introduced. We must work together to ensure that the high quality agricultural land base in Wheatland County is maintained.

SUGGESTIONS FOR PROTECTING AGRICULTURAL LAND AND LANDOWNERS FROM RISKY BULK SOIL DECISIONS

1. SCRUTINIZE THE SOURCE

Find out where soil will be coming from. Are there causes for concern based on the previous use of the land? Has the soil been brought to a site from another? Knowing exactly where soil is coming from is the first step in understanding whether it is right for your land. The Alberta Soil Information Viewer can offer information about soil characteristics from that location. It is recommended that you visit the source site to see what you're being offered before agreeing to accept the material.

2. CONFIRM QUALITY

After gaining an understanding of the source of the material you're being offered, request soil testing proportionate to soil transfer volume. What are the organic matter, sand, silt, and clay contents of the soil? When soil was stripped, were topsoil and subsoil kept separate or have they been mixed? Is there salinity or sodicity present that will make crop growth difficult? Do not assume you will be given clean topsoil; it is better to understand the quality problems present before soil is left for you to manage.

3. GUARANTEE PEST-FREE

Ensure soil is free of clubroot and other agricultural pests by requiring testing for soil-borne disease. Not only will your canola crops thank you, but diligence in preventing the spread of clubroot is required under the *Agricultural Pests Act*. You can also ask to have soil tested for presence of regulated weeds.

4. INSIST ON AN AGREEMENT

Get your expectations assured in writing through use of a contract or other agreement. How much soil are you acquiring? What is its quality, clubroot, and weed status? Whose responsibility is it to remove rocks and garbage that are left on your property? If quality, productivity, disease, or weed issues arise after soil has been placed, who is responsible for correcting them? Who is responsible for dust and other impacts during soil hauling? Who is responsible for obtaining any necessary authorizations for the work?

5. READ THE REGULATIONS

The placement of soil in areas where water flows or is present is regulated under Alberta's *Water Act*. A landowner will be personally liable for any changes to drainage that result in damage to infrastructure or other properties, or for any reported activities that become a compliance matter for Alberta Environment and Parks. Protect yourself by knowing and understanding the rules before deciding where to put soil. Be sure to check with the County regarding road use and development permit requirements.

6. WATCH FOR WEEDS

After soil has been placed, keep an eye on growth of any weed species. Weeds are much easier to manage when infestations are caught early. Enlist the assistance of your County Agriculture and Environment team to identify weeds and control measures if needed.



*Photos are local examples of agricultural problems caused by soil accepted from developers

For more information, please
contact Wheatland County's
Agriculture and Environment
Department at 403-934-3321
or email us at
admin@wheatlandcounty.ca

