

Producers learn latest about canola industry



Jaimie Puchinger with Farming Smarter helps lead a session about weeds during CanoLAB 2016 at Lethbridge College on Thursday afternoon. Herald photo by Tijana Martin

J.W. Schnarr

Local canola farmers and agronomists had an opportunity to get some hands-on training from some of the brightest agricultural minds from Western Canada and the U.S. this week.

CanoLAB 2016 is an event organized by the Canola Council of Canada and the Alberta Canola Producers Commission and involved two days of hands-on, interactive and diagnostic workshops featuring live plants and insects.

Eight sessions at Lethbridge College focused on a number of different topics of interest to canola farmers, including soil testing, canola grading and insect identification.

Autumn Barnes, agronomy specialist with the Canola Council of Canada, said the event represents an important and unique opportunity for local producers.

“The great thing about Canolab is that it’s a unique experience,” she said. “There really aren’t any other events like this, where farmers can have access to live plants and live insects, and world-class instructors in such a small group setting.”

Steve Marshman is a producer from Rosebud, who attended the event, and said it is important for growers to keep up on current trends.

“It’s a great opportunity for farmers to get out and learn more about what’s going on in the industry,” he said. He noted one of the sessions he attended involved market information to ensure farmers are doing all they can to ensure the product they provide is “the best in the world.”

“It’s all, in the end, a business,” he said.

Marshman said things can change from year to year when it comes to pests and diseases, and it is also important for farmers to stay informed in those areas.

“It’s great to get the hands-on (training),” he said. “When you’re scouting in the fields for insects, for example, it can be hard to identify (particular insects).”

“You can come here and see tons of examples of all the different insect stages from larvae to butterfly. It’s neat to put your hands on it and actually know you are looking at what you thought you were assessing.”

“Everybody, in all of the sessions, it’s all very hands-on,” said Barnes. “That’s what Canolab is all about. It’s about small groups, hands-on, and interactive learning opportunities for farmers and agronomists.”

This is the first time the college has hosted the event, which is also expected to benefit a number of agriculture students. Barnes said it is good to have many different aspects of the industry coming together.

“Farmers and industry have big jobs,” she said. They have a lot to think about. Among those issues are the different crops they grow, pests they face, and marketing and market access.

“We’re really trying to teach them as much as we can to make them the most successful canola growers possible,” she said. “I think it’s really important to note our farmers are always taking part in events like this and always looking for new learning opportunities.”