

Farming Smarter Conference Returns to Medicine Hat Oct. 26

By Tim Kalinowski



Plant scientist Jack Schultz speaks at the Medicine Hat Farming Smarter conference in 2016. Photo by Tim Kalinowski

Farming Smarter will be hosting its first annual Cypress conference at the Medicine Hat Lodge on Oct. 26. Starting at 8 a.m., the full day conference will showcase cutting edge information on various facets of the agriculture industry in southern Alberta and beyond.

The format change to a one day, annual conference in Medicine Hat instead of a two day biannual conference should maximize Farming Smarter's efforts to reach out to local farmers in a way which is informative and relevant to their concerns, says Farming Smarter assistant manager Jamie Puchinger.

"I think we have grown to a size where we can accommodate the Medicine Hat participants every year," says Puchinger. "We have traditionally had a conference since the early 1990s that has alternated between Lethbridge and Medicine Hat. This last year we decided to add an annual one day event in Medicine Hat in October and keep our two day event in Lethbridge in December."

This year's keynote speaker at the Medicine Hat conference is Dr.

Mary Burrows, who will speak about wheat streak mosaic virus. But Puchinger expects the session on land tax and income sharing, hosted by Ryan Stevenson of KPMG, to produce the hottest debate at the conference this year in light of recently proposed federal income tax changes.

"We want attendees to be challenged in their thinking and looking at their whole operation in a different light," says Puchinger. "They might not always agree with the speaker's overall message, but that speaker will challenge them to look at their thoughts and opinions on specific issues. We also want to look at those "hot" issues which can affect their operations, like the proposed federal tax changes for example. We always try to incorporate those things as well." Other topics covered at the conference will be "Zebra Mussel Tussle," "Forage Foundations," "Resistance is Futile," and several other informative sessions ranging from insect control to watershed health.

Puchinger says the Farming Smarter conference has been growing in attendance and popularity each year. And more farmers seem to be keenly interested these days in finding new ways to inform themselves and increase their farming education to enhance the efficiency of their operations, she says.

"More and more we have farms which are whole businesses," explains Puchinger. "They have to be the jack-of-all-trades. They have got to know how to grow the crop and the agronomy, but they also have to know how to manage their business and ensure it is being profitable. Today farmers definitely need to be thinking about whole farm management, and we try to put together our conferences keeping that in mind. We want to make sure they have the best information we can give them."

Farming Smarter is happy to be able to double its conference offerings to have sessions both in Medicine Hat and Lethbridge every year, says Puchinger.

"We just really enjoy working with the farmers and getting more and more research to share with them," she says. "Farming Smarter has a brand people are starting to recognize as unbiased and as an organization which provides scientifically-based information. I hope we can be a trusted resource for people looking for information as far as their farm business goes."

For more information on the upcoming conferences in both Medicine Hat and Lethbridge visit the Farming Smarter website at www.farmingsmarter.com.