

# Farming Smarter participates in Open Farm Days

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Aug 8, 2019

Farming Smarter will be one of many locations that is participating in Open Farm Days on August 17.

“Farming Smarter is a non-profit registered Canadian charity that focuses on projects to improve the resilience of crop production in Southern Alberta,” Ken Coles, General Manager of Farming Smarter, says. “We want people to come here for Open Farm Days and have a memorable experience. We strive to sneak some knowledge in with fun, hands-on opportunities.”

Coles says that this year will be the fourth time that Farming Smarter has participated in Alberta Open Farm Days. During their event, Farming Smarter will offer wagon ride tours through their research farm to share some of the cool things that the company studies with the intent of giving attendees a sense of how much farmers currently have to know in order to be successful.

Coles says that there will also be an “ask a farmer” booth that will give everyone the opportunity to ask a current farmer about their operation. A kids zone will offer face painting, crafts and games with an agricultural twist. Farming Smarter, Coles says, has asked a number of other businesses, organizations and farmers to participate and set up a “booth” where participants can learn or see something different at each one.

Booth exhibitors, Coles says, will include Coaldale Bakery, who will talk about differences in flour; GreenHaven, who will talk about garden soil; Earthly Matters with worms, 4-H, Winter Wheat Initiative, Economic Development Lethbridge, AJM Seeds, Alberta Canola, Benchmark Meats, bees with a government researcher, weed identification and technology with Xarvio, field scale equipment dealers, and Oaklane Colony with fresh produce.

“We want to give everyone the opportunity to visit our research farm, to learn about current production practices, see agriculture research and current technology, talk about what the crops are processed into, climb on modern day equipment, and do other wonderful things,” Coles says.

Coles says that Farming Smarter inspires and empowers innovation in agriculture by bridging ideas, conducting practical research, sharing knowledge that they apply to the adaptation and adoption of innovative crop technologies and management . Farming Smarter, Coles says, also applies, adapts and encourages adoption of innovative crop technologies and management practices that make farming successful, and sustains environmental, social and economic health.

“Farming Smarter is a relatively young organization with deep roots in southern Alberta crop production,” Coles says. “It grew from a soil conservation association and an agricultural research association that saw a benefit to working together. That opportunity proved to be an excellent partnership that evolved. The success of the original partnership fosters an open attitude within Farming Smarter toward partnerships that achieve useful advancements in all areas of its core mandate; which is to provide the information southern Alberta farmers need to be progressive businesses in Canadian agriculture.”

With their head office located just east of Lethbridge, according to Coles, Farming Smarter consists of a team of seven dedicated staff and a gang of seasonal students, all of whom perform the work of the organization. There are also satellite research sites near Medicine Hat and Taber. The organization, Coles says, follows policy governance directed by a volunteer Board of Directors with majority producers with membership including agricultural stakeholders interested in furthering the objectives of the association.

“Farming Smarter reflects the values and experience of its origins as it grows into a strong organization enabling southern Alberta farmers to prosper,” Coles says. “Farming Smarter focuses on regional research projects that improve or enhance efficient management and leading-edge production practices. These efforts provide local solutions to improve profitability and generational endurance of farm businesses. Farming Smarter believes that

unbiased research leads to trusted results; that open communication provides mutual benefits and that partnership moves the whole region forward together.”

Coles emphasizes that the guiding principles of Farming Smarter include possessing scientifically sound, practical, unbiased research, being responsive to member and client needs, having an open attitude toward partnerships, providing concise and easily accessible information, and being a source of fun and interactive learning.

“We are an amazing group of people who work hard and have fun!” Coles says. “We do research that is meaningful and practical to help farmers. Our events help us share what we learn from research to the people that need it. We play an important role connecting individuals, companies and organizations operating in this industry.”

For more information about Farming Smarter’s Open Farm Days event, visit: <https://www.farmingsmarter.com/event/open-farm-day/>.