

# Farming Smarter offers fun way to learn about agriculture

BY WOODARD, DALE ON AUGUST 18, 2020.

An education in agriculture was in full bloom Saturday afternoon at Farming Smarter.

In a one-day, province-wide initiative, the Farming Smarter Association welcomed those unfamiliar with the agricultural life with Alberta Open Farm Days.

“Farmers across Alberta are opening their doors to mostly city folks and invite them to come out and learn about a farm or, in our case, research farm,” said Jamie Puchinger, assistant manager at Farming Smarter. “It’s a provincial initiative to get people who aren’t involved in agriculture out to a farm to learn about how food is produced. Our event brings in a number of different aspects of agriculture. So we ask different exhibitors to come and share something different.”

Saturday’s event at the Farming Smarter location on the city’s northeast side included wagon rides and a crop tour to learn about integrated pest management and sweeping for insects.

Attendants of Saturday’s Alberta Open Farm Days were schooled on what lives in the soil and how it helps plants grow, as well as what plant seeds look like when they grow and what common crops are grown in southern Alberta.



*Figure 1 Mackenzie Slingerland (right) tries her hand at team roping under the watchful eye of Jessie Ferguson of South Region 4H Saturday afternoon at Farming Smarter. Herald photo by Dale Woodard*

Crop protection demonstrating how farmers monitor their crops with an eye on crop health, beneficial insects, environmental health and cost as well as bug battles against harmful insects were also a part of Saturday's event.

"There's a spray demonstration with one of our variable rate sprayers so he can show there is some technology that allows spraying to be very specific in spots and not where you want it in others," said Puchinger. "We have a barbeque going on for folks that are hungry and we have a couple of different demonstrations. One of the big draws is the large equipment. They always want to know what it does and how much it costs."

In keeping with COVID-19 protocols laid out by Alberta Health Services, a maximum of 100 people were allowed on the premises at a time.

"I think a couple of times today we reached our 100 per cent capacity," said Puchinger. "We had that a couple of times and then we just have to wait for some folks to leave before we allow more folks to enter."

"We set it up so the tables are double stacked so it gives us our physical barrier of six feet of separation. We are encouraging people to wear masks and we have provided them with bandannas. So you see some folks with Farming Smarter bandannas, a double layer of cotton. We have hand sanitizer all throughout the facility and we have bleach solution for the exhibitors to clean off their stuff that has been touched in between each family."