



# Living, Playing and Working in Farming Communities

## INTRODUCTION

### Rural Life

Rural communities are great places to live, work and play. The lifestyle, wide-open spaces and easy access to recreation are just some of the reasons people choose rural Manitoba. Our lakes, rivers and forests are magnificent. Manitoba's incredible rural landscapes also provide a home to the business of agriculture.

### Farming — A Serious Business

Manitoba's farm families put food on our tables and on the tables of people around the world. Farming is a livelihood for producers and their families. It is also a main contributor to our provincial economy. Along with traditional grains, oilseeds, livestock and poultry, Manitoba farmers produce a wide variety of fruits, vegetables and even fish. Rural Manitobans are always finding creative ways to diversify the rural economy through on-farm processing, direct farm marketing and agri-tourism. Manitoba is also home to a vibrant, growing, food processing sector that creates jobs and markets for primary agricultural products.

## UNDERSTANDING THE FARMING COMMUNITY

### Understanding Farming – Compatibility is Key

Good land use planning is one tool in building communities where different types of land uses can co-exist successfully. Municipal government leaders in charge of land use planning need to understand how farms operate. People who live and play in agricultural areas must respect farming and the role it plays in feeding all of us. At the same time, farm producers should run their farms in ways that show consideration for their neighbours.

### Facts of Life in Rural Communities

Farm and non-farm land uses are not always compatible. Farmers need farmland, usually in large parcels, if they are to continue producing the food that feeds our families and our economy. People who use land for residential and recreational purposes may not wish to tolerate farm-generated smells, noise, dust and smoke.

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That's why it is important to keep non-farm development away from farmland and existing farms wherever possible.

## **Routine Farming Practices are Part of Rural Life**

Routine farming practices include using crop protection products, storing and applying manure, housing animals and operating farm equipment. Some of these practices can create smells, dust, noise and smoke.

### **Using crop protection products**

Consumers demand high quality, safe, attractive food products. Pesticides are a tool farmers can use to meet these demands. They help protect crops from insect damage, weed infestations and diseases that affect quality and yield. Deciding to use pesticides depends on many factors including crop stage, type and severity of an infestation and the cost of the product.

Application timing and the methods used are strongly influenced by weather conditions and surrounding land uses. Farmers consider wind speed and direction, and nearby residential and recreational areas to avoid the possibility of pesticides accidentally drifting onto non-target areas, animals and plants.

Non-farm development in an agricultural area can reduce flexibility farmers have in putting crop protection programs into action. Spray planes can cover large areas quickly, and are especially useful when fields are too wet for vehicles. Unfortunately, residential development in agricultural areas may make spray plane use out of the question.

### **Manure storage and animal housing**

Manure storage facilities and animal housing can generate odours year-round. How strong odours are and how often they are experienced depends on the type of operation, its management and peoples' perceptions. Farmers normally keep their pens and barns clean for many reasons, including odour reduction. More producers are investing in odour controlling technologies such as manure storage covers and shelterbelts.

When municipal governments write land use by-laws they are asked to set separation distances between livestock operations and residential or recreational developments. These separation distances can help reduce odour problems. Provincial guidelines recommend larger separation distances for larger livestock operations. Areas designated as residential or recreational also receive a much larger buffer area than a single residential yard site.

It is important for municipalities to look first at existing livestock operations when considering non-farm development proposals of any size, including single dwellings or residential and recreational developments.

### **Livestock manure application**

Under Manitoba law, manure can be used only as a crop fertilizer. Most livestock producers apply manure on a seasonal basis, rather than year-round. This usually means odour from manure application is produced for a relatively short period, once or twice a year. On annual cropland, liquid manure is often applied below the soil surface using injection, which helps to control odours. Farmers usually apply manure to the surface of the soil when fertilizing forage crops or annual crops in a reduced-tillage situation. The province recommends that livestock farmers use setback distances from the property lines of nearby residences and designated areas.

### **Movement of farm equipment and vehicles**

Farmers need to use public roads to move farm equipment from field to field. The hefty size and slow speed of farm equipment can create traffic problems and safety concerns during the growing season.

While competing for space on public roads is usually just an inconvenience, real safety concerns also arise when farmers must move their equipment through densely populated rural areas. Truck traffic, which moves feed, fuel, livestock and crops on municipal roads, can create unsafe conditions for residents who use these roads for driving, cycling and walking.

## LIVING AND PLAYING IN RURAL MANITOBA

### Dust and smoke

On farms, dust is created during seeding, tilling and harvesting. Dust also comes from truck traffic on municipal roads. Reduced tillage and shelterbelt planting, both tools for preventing soil erosion, also help to minimize dust. The best way to minimize the effects of dust is to keep farmlands and residential lands separated.

While most Manitoba farmers manage crop residues through tillage and other means, some farmers choose to burn excess straw and stubble. Under some conditions, with some crops, burning may be the only practical way to dispose of residues. Provincial laws set out rules for where, when and under what conditions residues may be burned. These regulations are in place to minimize the local and regional adverse effects stubble burning may have on public health and safety.



Many families live in rural communities and enjoy recreation in and around them. But with rural living comes responsibility. Rural residents and recreational guests in rural Manitoba must respect certain aspects of rural life.

### Trespassing

Entering farmland without permission can have serious consequences for the farmer. Vehicles, ATVs, snowmobiles and people can damage crops, ruin pastures or spread weed seeds and plant diseases between farm fields. Personal safety can be a concern when entering fields used for grazing livestock. Livestock and poultry farmers pay strict attention to biological security and they understand that trespassers can unwittingly transfer animal diseases from one farm to the next.

If a municipality wishes to attract recreational users, it is important to work with farmers and visitors to ensure both groups understand the possible harm caused by trespassing on farmland. Municipalities can send this message to the public by distributing brochures (such as this one) and installing appropriate signs.

### Crown lands

Many Manitoba cattle farmers lease Crown lands for grazing and haying, often paying for fencing and water supply development to improve productivity. The public may enter leased Crown lands for lawful purposes such as bird watching, berry picking, hiking and hunting. When entering Crown land used for grazing or haying, the public needs to understand farmers rely on the land for their livelihoods. ATV and vehicle traffic can tear up forage crops. Fences and gates exist to keep livestock from wandering where they shouldn't. Recreational users need to respect and help protect the farmer's livelihood. People who use Crown lands also need to make themselves aware of where Crown land ends and private land begins.

### Family dogs

Dogs allowed to run loose can be highly destructive to farm animals. Some dogs have been known to kill sheep and chickens or chase livestock, causing stress and slowing weight gain. Holes dug in pastures by dogs have even been known to cripple grazing animals.

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### **Weed control**

Farmers must control weeds to protect crop yields, maintain crop quality and protect grazing livestock from illness or death caused by toxic plants in pastures and hay crops. At the same time, rural residential lots are often large and need a lot of care and maintenance, including control of weeds. If weeds from residential properties spread to neighbouring farm fields, they can cause farmers serious economic harm. Municipal governments can assume the responsibility of controlling weeds on private property — at the property owner's expense.

### **THE FARM PRACTICES PROTECTION ACT**

While good planning can separate incompatible types of development, many rural communities already have a mix of farm and non-farm residents. Here, there will likely always be differences when it comes to land use. There is even potential for disagreement between farmers who raise livestock and those who do not.

In Manitoba, *The Farm Practices Protection Act* sets out a process to help resolve nuisance disputes by providing individuals or groups concerned about such things as odour, dust and noise generated from a farming practice the opportunity to have that practice reviewed outside of a court of law. The act also gives farmers using accepted farming practices protection from unfounded complaints.

**For more information, contact your local Manitoba Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives Growing Opportunities Centre or Office.**

Prepared by Manitoba Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives.

