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TUESDAY 09 JUNE 2026 VOL. 2 / ISSUE 57

Rural Alberta Report

— East Central Alberta and Beyond —

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SwitchUp® Buckets & Stettler Ag Society Summer Kick-Off Event Recap

submitted by KELSEY MESTON



From May 22–24, SwitchUp® Buckets, in partnership with the Stettler Ag Society, proudly hosted a successful Summer Kick-Off Event at the Stettler Ag Grounds. The weekend was packed with learning opportunities, competition, and community spirit, bringing together rodeo enthusiasts of all ages and skill levels. Photo: Submitted by Kelsey Meston (continue reading SWITCHUP BUCKLES on page 08)



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Lacombe County rejects fence agreement

by CHERYL BOWMAN

Lacombe County council has rejected a proposed licence agreement that would have allowed a fence encroachment to remain on county-owned land.

The decision came during council's May 28 meeting after councillors reviewed a draft licence of occupation prepared for a fence that extends onto county property.

The matter stems from an appeal first brought before council in March. At its April 23 meeting, council directed administration to prepare a draft licence of occupation for the encroaching fence for future consideration. A licence of occupation is a legal agreement that allows a private party to use public land under specific terms and conditions while ownership remains with the municipality.

After reviewing the proposed agreement, council voted against approving the licence. According to meeting highlights released by the county, a motion to approve the agreement was defeated. Council then directed the county manager to order removal of the fence within 30 days of notifying the property owner.

The issue attracted council attention earlier this year after administration presented information on the encroachment and correspondence related to the matter. During the April meeting, administration provided an overview of the circumstances surrounding the fence and council directed staff to

Lacombe County council has rejected a proposed licence agreement that would have allowed a fence encroachment to remain on county-owned land. Photo: Screenshot



prepare a possible agreement for consideration rather than making an immediate decision.

No details were released regarding the dimensions of the encroachment or the anticipated cost of removing the fence.

The property owner will now receive notice from the county and be required to remove the encroachment within the timeline established by council. If the fence is not removed, further action may be required by the municipality to enforce the directive.

Bashaw council supports seniors residence

by CHERYL BOWMAN

Bashaw town council has approved submitting a letter supporting a development permit application for the Bashaw Valley Lodge seniors residence.

Council discussed the proposal during its June 1 meeting and passed a motion to provide a letter approving the development permit for the facility located at 5430-51A St.

The application is part of a revitalization project for Bashaw Valley Lodge, which is proposed to operate as a seniors' living residence. As part of the development process, nearby residents were invited to review the proposal and provide feedback through a neighbourhood consultation process.

Documents included in the agenda package state the project is intended to provide a community-oriented environment for seniors while maintaining and improving the property for the benefit of the surrounding neighbourhood.

The development permit application was submitted in April and reviewed by the Town of Bashaw in accordance with the municipality's land use bylaw.

According to the permit documents, the residence will be permitted to operate with a maximum of 38 seniors' dwelling units and a minimum of

continue reading BASHAW SENIOR on page 08

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Castor Resident Punches Ticket to Road to Okotoks with Vauxhall Jets

submitted by NATASHA BOZEK



Kaleb Bozek from Castor, Alberta and the Vauxhall Jets punched their ticket to the Road to Okotoks National Championship, also known as the Morneau Cup, taking place in Okotoks July 14-19, 2026. The Jets beat Team Sask 9-5 to secure their spot at the National Championship.

The Road to Okotoks is Baseball Canada's ultimate showcase of talent, competition, and championship spirit. The event will bring together the strongest programs from across Canada to compete for the Morneau Cup and the right to be crowned the first National Champion.

Left to right: Cedric LeBlanc, Noah Simpson, Kaleb Bozek, Kaz Harris, Noah McIntosh, Jaxon George, Josh Daloise, Easton Kitura, Charlie McMillan, Hudson Nikkel, Graham Thiessen, Ben Connolly, Matthew Getz, Will Zielinski, Kaden Carson, Mark Vulcano, Gerritt Vanderwal, Tanner Morris, Calum Andersen, Rogan Rivard, Aiden Sloan, Carter Bevan, Head Coach Les McTavish, and Assistant Coach Jim Kotkas. Photo taken by Tricia Andersen on May 30, 2026

Future of ALUS program uncertain in Lacombe County

by CHERYL BOWMAN

Lacombe County council has stopped short of committing funding to the Alternative Land Use Services program (ALUS) after receiving a proposal seeking annual financial support to continue operations in the municipality.

Council reviewed the request during its May 28 meeting after the matter was referred from the Agricultural Service Board earlier this spring.

ALUS is a stewardship program that works with agricultural producers to establish projects intended to provide environmental benefits while maintaining productive agricultural

landscapes. The organization compensates landowners who undertake approved projects and provides ongoing maintenance payments.

According to information presented to council, ALUS Canada is seeking \$55,000 annually from Lacombe County to cover administrative costs associated with delivering the ALUS Lacombe program. The funds would be paid to Red Deer County, which currently administers the program.

The proposal warned that without local funding support, ALUS programming in Lacombe County could end after Dec. 31, 2026.

Administration provided council with additional information requested by the Agricultural Service Board, including a breakdown of operating expenses and details about completed projects. Since its launch, the program has supported 60 projects involving 28 participants across the county. Those projects include off-site watering systems, riparian fencing, grazing management initiatives, tree and shelterbelt planting, hay management projects and crop conversion efforts. Together they represent approximately 930 acres.

The proposed budget allocates \$33,000 toward

continue reading LACOMBE ALUS on page 08

Rain soaks east-central Alberta

by CHERYL BOWMAN



Coronation received more than 88 Milliliters of rain since May 30. Photo taken June 2 by Daryl Perry

East-Central Alberta has received some of the heaviest rainfall seen in recent years over the past week, bringing much-needed moisture to drought-prone areas but also creating concerns for farmers and ranchers as saturated fields delay fieldwork and increase the risk of crop and livestock issues.

A prolonged storm system moved across much of central and southern Alberta between May 30 and June 2, producing widespread rainfall totals that exceeded normal monthly amounts in some locations. Weather reports indicated several areas of central Alberta received between 50 and 100 millimetres of rain during the event, with some localized areas recording even higher amounts. The Weather Network reported that some locations across Alberta approached or exceeded 100 millimetres of precipitation during the multi-day system.

The rainfall arrived after portions of Alberta entered the growing season with lingering moisture deficits.

Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada's latest drought assessment showed much of the northern and central Prairies had already received above-normal precipitation this spring, and the recent storm has further improved soil moisture reserves across many agricultural regions.

While the rain has replenished dugouts, pasture land and crop moisture reserves, excessive moisture can create new challenges for producers. Wet field conditions can delay seeding operations and prevent spraying of emerging crops. Saturated soils may also lead to ponding in low-lying

areas, reducing plant growth and increasing the risk of seedling diseases. Producers with hay and forage crops may face difficulties accessing fields if wet conditions persist.

For ranchers, extended periods of cool, wet weather can increase stress on young livestock and create muddy conditions around feeding and watering areas. Excess moisture can also affect pasture management if cattle cause soil compaction in saturated fields.

Weather forecasts suggest the region may not receive much opportunity to dry out during the coming week. Environment Canada is forecasting periodic chances of showers and thunderstorms across central Alberta through much of the next seven days, with daytime highs generally ranging from the mid-teens to low 20s Celsius. Additional showers are possible on several days between June 5 and June 10.

Longer-range outlooks for the Prairies indicate a continued pattern of scattered showers and relatively cool conditions through mid-June, which could maintain favourable moisture levels but slow drying in some agricultural areas.

For many producers, the recent rains represent a mixed blessing. After several years in which moisture shortages were a primary concern, water supplies have improved considerably. However, if additional rainfall materializes over the next week, attention may shift from drought concerns to managing excess moisture and delayed field operations as the growing season advances.

Agriculture

Farm groups push for CUSMA renewal

by KCJ MEDIA GROUP

Agricultural and food organizations from Canada, the United States and Mexico are urging their governments to renew the Canada-United States-Mexico Agreement (CUSMA) as the trade pact approaches a scheduled review on July 1.

More than 160 organizations from across North America have signed a joint letter calling for the agreement to be extended, arguing that the deal has strengthened trade ties and improved the competitiveness of the continent's agriculture and food sectors. The Canadian Agri-Food Trade Alliance (CAFTA) is among the Canadian groups supporting the initiative.

The organizations say Canada, the United States and Mexico remain each other's most important

agricultural trading partners and that maintaining a stable trade framework is critical for farmers, food processors and exporters. They contend that the agreement has improved market access, increased transparency in trade rules and reduced barriers that can slow the movement of agricultural products across borders.

According to the groups, agri-food trade among the three countries has grown substantially over the past two decades. They argue that preserving the agreement would help North America remain competitive in global markets while supporting common standards related to food safety, plant and animal health, and agricultural innovation.

The review comes at a time of uncertainty in North American

trade relations. While many Canadian exports continue to enter the United States duty-free under CUSMA, tariffs remain in place on some sectors, including steel, aluminum and automobiles. Trade officials from all three countries have been discussing the future of the agreement ahead of the review process.

Canada and Mexico have both indicated support for extending the agreement for another 16 years. If all three countries agree during the review process, the pact can be renewed. If no consensus is reached, the agreement would remain in force but would be subject to annual reviews.

For Canadian agriculture, the outcome is significant because the United States and Mexico are among the country's largest export markets

for a wide range of products, including grains, oilseeds, livestock and processed foods. Industry groups say a renewed agreement would provide greater certainty for producers and businesses making long-term investment decisions.



Farmers warned of water shortages

by KCJ MEDIA GROUP

Southern Alberta's irrigation district is expecting lower water levels this year, which could affect farmers relying on the region's canals and reservoirs. Early forecasts indicate that water supply may be below average due to lower snowpack and reduced runoff from the Rocky Mountains.

Farmers are being advised to prepare for potential restrictions and manage irrigation carefully. Officials warn that water demand may exceed availability at times, which could impact crop production if dry conditions persist. Seasonal storage and reservoir management will be critical to maintaining access for as many users as possible.

While some parts of the district may see sufficient water, overall supply is likely to be tight, making conservation and planning essential for the coming growing season.

Competition Bureau orders sale of Sask. grain elevator

by KCJ MEDIA GROUP

A proposed \$150-million acquisition in Canada's grain sector will move ahead only after the sale of a Saskatchewan grain elevator, following intervention by the Competition Bureau.

The federal regulator has reached an agreement with Parrish & Heimbecker regarding its planned purchase of GrainsConnect Canada Operations. The bureau concluded the transaction could reduce competition for wheat purchases in the area surrounding Reford, Sask., where both companies have grain handling operations.

Under the agreement, Parrish & Heimbecker must sell GrainsConnect's grain elevator business in Reford to a buyer approved by the Commissioner of

Competition. The bureau said the measure is intended to preserve competition among grain buyers and maintain marketing options for farmers in the region.

The acquisition, announced in late 2025 and valued at approximately \$150 million, includes four grain elevators located in Saskatchewan and Alberta as well as a stake in the Fraser Grain Terminal in British Columbia.

Competition Bureau officials determined that combining the companies' operations would likely lessen competition for wheat purchases from producers near Reford. Grain elevators serve as key delivery points where farmers sell harvested grain, and competition among elevator operators can influence pricing and marketing opportunities.

Parrish & Heimbecker has agreed to the sale requirement but has maintained that it does not share the bureau's assessment of competition in the area. The company said the agreement provides a way to complete the broader transaction without prolonged regulatory proceedings.

Until the Reford facility is sold, the company must continue operating the elevator normally. The agreement has been registered with the Competition Tribunal, giving it the force of a court order.

The case is the latest example of regulatory scrutiny of consolidation in Canada's grain handling sector, where industry mergers can affect the number of buyers available to farmers in local markets.

Alberta RCMP Traffic – Whitecourt Unit assists woodlands county and its residents

media release ALBERTA RCMP

Woodlands County/Whitecourt, Alta. – On May 11, 2026, an out-of-control wildfire broke out in Woodlands County, just Southeast of Whitecourt. At the time, the Whitecourt Traffic Unit was actively engaged in National Road Safety Week, conducting enhanced traffic enforcement and education initiatives aimed at reducing unsafe driving practices.

As the wildfire escalated, the Traffic Unit quickly shifted priorities to assist partner agencies with the evacuation of residents from over 100 homes. Members supported coordinated evacuation efforts to help ensure public safety during this critical incident.

A portion of Highway 43 was designated as a reduced speed zone to accommodate emergency operations. The Traffic Unit conducted high-visibility patrols to promote the safe and efficient movement of emergency personnel and equipment to and from the wildfire area.

During the response, Woodlands County staff identified concerns regarding the wellbeing of pets and livestock left behind in the evacuation zone. In response, the Traffic Unit partnered with County staff and members of the Whitecourt RCMP Detachment to organize supplies and coordinate care efforts.

This initiative — named “The Paw Patrol” by County staff — saw members attend multiple residences to feed and water animals, including cats, dogs, horses, goats, and chickens.

“It was a very busy week for the Alberta RCMP Traffic – Whitecourt Unit as members balanced proactive enforcement with an unexpected emergency response” said Sgt. Greg Anderson of the Alberta RCMP Traffic-Whitecourt Unit. “We are always dedicated to the community and are glad to help, especially during times of need”.



Alberta RCMP warn public of high-risk offender

media release ALBERTA RCMP

Red Deer County, Alta. – In the interest of public safety, Alberta RCMP are issuing the following information and warning regarding the release of Kyle Soloway (33) who was released on May 19, 2026, after serving a custodial sentence for a conviction of sexual interference. The Alberta RCMP has reasonable grounds to believe he will commit another

act of sexual violence against a child while in community.

Soloway, believed to be in the area of Red Deer County, is described as:

- 185 cm (6'1") tall;
- 71 kgs (156 lbs) in weight;
- black hair; and
- brown eyes.

Soloway is subject to a weapons prohibition order and is bound by an order prohibiting him from attending a public park or public swimming area where persons under the age of 16 years are present. He is prohibited from attending a daycare centre, schoolground, playground, or community centre. He is not to

continue reading OFFENDER on page 07

Bashaw backs RCMP staffing concerns

by CHERYL BOWMAN

Bashaw council has voted to support concerns about staffing shortages at the Bashaw RCMP detachment by sending a letter to RCMP leadership.

The issue was raised through correspondence from the Village of Alix, which was included in the council's June 1 consent agenda. The letter, addressed to RCMP Deputy Commissioner Trevor Daroux, outlined ongoing concerns about officer shortages serving communities within the Bashaw detachment area.

According to the letter, only two of the detachment's six regular member positions are currently filled. While the village acknowledged assistance from the RCMP's K Division Relief Unit, it said staffing challenges have persisted for an extended period.

"I was shocked to hear that we were relying on 2 active police officers," stated Deputy Mayor Kyle McIntosh.

Alix council stated that effective community policing relies on officers building local knowledge and relationships within the communities they serve. The letter noted that frequent reliance on relief officers can make it more difficult to maintain that continuity.

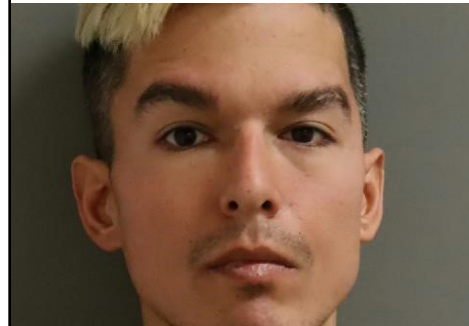
The village also pointed out that the detachment's approved staffing complement increased from five officers to six under Alberta's Police Funding Model, but said the detachment has not operated at full

strength since the additional position was added.

"If we can fix this, it has to be fixed," said Coun. Carman Meger. McIntosh pointed out that the Village of Alix's letter clearly outlined the staffing challenges facing the Bashaw detachment and the impact those shortages can have on rural communities.

Council approved a motion authorizing Mayor Cindy Orom to send a letter to Deputy Commissioner Trevor Daroux supporting the concerns raised by the Village of Alix and requesting action to restore staffing levels at the Bashaw detachment.

OFFENDER continued from page 06



Soloway, believed to be in the area of Red Deer County, is described as:
-185 cm (6'1") tall;
-71 kgs (156 lbs) in weight;
-black hair; and
-brown eyes.
Photo: Submitted

seek or maintain employment or volunteer in a capacity that involves being in a position of trust or authority towards persons under the age of 16.

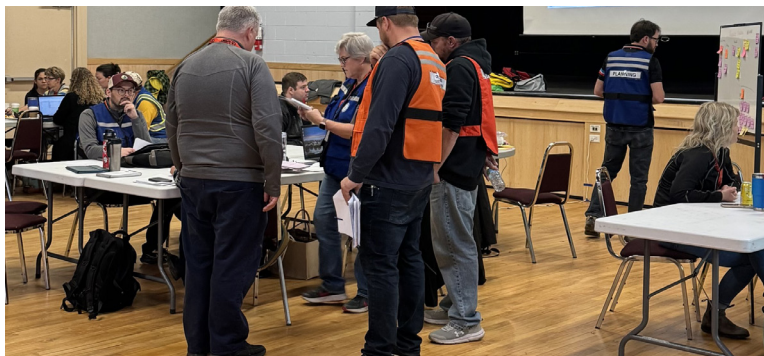
Soloway is a child sexual offender who has a history of using the internet to lure young teens to meet. He has also approached girls under the age of 16 in public to offer transportation.

The Alberta RCMP is issuing this information and warning after careful deliberation and consideration of all related issues, including privacy concerns, in the belief that it is clearly in the public interest to inform the members of the community of Soloway's release. The RCMP believes that there is a risk of significant harm to the health and safety of the public.

The intent of this process is to enable members of the public to take suitable precautionary measures and not to embark on any form of vigilante action. Anyone believing that a crime has been or is about to be committed is encouraged to call police. If the matter is felt to be of an urgent nature, please call 911 to report the location and circumstances.



Nearly 300 people gathered at the Stettler Community Hall on June 2 to celebrate the 40th anniversary of Alberta Seniors' Week. The event was hosted by the County of Stettler Housing Authority board and management. Rural Alberta Report / C. Bowman



The Three Hills community center welcomed nearly 100 participants last week for two days of emergency preparedness teaching and planning exercises. Submitted Kneehill County, Rural Alberta Report / David Nadeau

The Rural Alberta Report would like to extend its sincere thanks to Stu Salkeld for his hard work, professionalism and dedication as our resident journalist over the past year.

Stu has played an important role in bringing local stories, events and community news to our readers and we are grateful for his contributions to the newspaper.

While we are sorry to see him leave our team, we are pleased that he has accepted an exciting new opportunity with Your West Central Voice and Chronicle, where he will continue reporting on the people, events and issues that matter to rural communities.

We wish Stu every success in this next chapter of his journalism career and thank him for everything he has done for The Rural Alberta Report.

SWITCHUP BUCKLES continued from page 01



From May 22–24, SwitchUp® Buckets, in partnership with the Stettler Ag Society, proudly hosted a successful Summer Kick-Off Event at the Stettler Ag Grounds. The weekend was packed with learning opportunities, competition, and community spirit, bringing together rodeo enthusiasts of all ages and skill levels.

The event featured a series of rodeo clinics led by accomplished industry professionals, including pro rodeo money winners, Canadian Finals Rodeo (CFR) qualifiers, and respected competitors at the top of their disciplines. Participants had the opportunity to learn from some of the best while developing their skills in a supportive and encouraging environment.

The weekend began on Friday with a Team Roping Clinic hosted by Jenner Meston. Saturday featured a Breakaway Roping Clinic led by Aubrey Ross, Jessie Armstrong, and Bobbi Henderson, followed by an evening Open Breakaway Jackpot that welcomed both youth and adult competitors.

The event concluded on Sunday with a Barrel Racing Clinic hosted by

Diane Skocdopole. On Sunday evening there was a Barrel Racing Jackpot, which was open to competitors of all ages. The jackpot drew approximately 60 entries across the Pee wee, Youth, and Open divisions, creating an exciting finish to an action-packed weekend.

Throughout the clinics, participants were eligible for numerous draws and giveaways. Thanks to the support of our sponsors and partners, more than \$1,600 in prizes and giveaways were awarded to clinic participants over the course of the weekend. Not including the money won in the Saturday and Sunday evening jackpots!

In addition to the clinics and jackpots, several vendors were set up throughout the weekend, giving attendees the opportunity to browse and support local businesses while enjoying the event atmosphere.

A special thank you goes to JD Photos by Cynda, our professional photographer for the weekend, who captured countless memories and highlights from the event for participants and spectators alike.

We extend our sincere thanks to our clinicians, participants, volunteers, vendors, sponsors, and the Stettler Ag Society for helping make this event such a success. The enthusiasm and support shown throughout the weekend highlighted the strength of our rodeo community, and we look forward to continuing to provide opportunities for learning, competition, and growth in the future.



BASHAW SENIOR continued from page 02

three full-time staff members on site at all times.

The permit approval applies to the operation of the seniors' residence and does not authorize changes to the overall site plan or exterior elevations of the building. Any future site or elevation changes would require additional development approval.

Town administration advised council that the outstanding information required for the application had been received, allowing the application to proceed as complete.

The development permit was issued effective June 1 and will remain valid for 12 months if development has not commenced.

LACOMBE ALUS continued from page 03

staffing costs, along with office expenses, vehicle costs, advisory committee expenses and support services provided by ALUS Canada.

The request follows presentations made to the Agricultural Service Board in April, when representatives outlined the proposal and answered questions regarding administration costs and program results.

The proposal was ultimately received for information, with no funding commitment approved.

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