

Invasive Species Update

In March, the Alberta Invasive Species Council held a very successful conference in Olds. The take home message from this conference was that Albertans cannot let down their guard when it comes to alien species invading our pristine environment. Here are several invaders highlighted at the conference:

Squeal on Pigs

Invasive wild boar at large and hybrid pigs appear to be increasing in Alberta. They can damage crops and landscapes. They are elusive and only their damage may be initially noticed. If you see unexplained disturbed land, contact AF.wildboar@gov.ab.ca or call 310.FARM to report this damage.



Understand your grass.

Many lakeshore cottagers like to see a thick, green lawn and are tempted to seed or sod down as close to the shore as possible. In order for them to ensure invasive annual grasses such as downy brome or Japanese brome do not take a foothold on lake areas, cottagers need to ensure their sod or seed does not contain that species by asking their suppliers to ensure their products are free of these species. Also, don't go crazy fertilizing your shoreside grass. Too much nitrogen fertilizer can leach into the water, enhancing devastating algae blooms.



Down brome riparian infestation



Algae bloom

Burn it Where you Buy It

Firewood can contain invasive species, including insects harboring invading diseases such as Dutch Elm Disease or a wide variety of ash diseases carried by the Emerald Ash Borer. If, in your travels, you buy firewood, burn it where you bought it and do not return to your Summer Village with it.



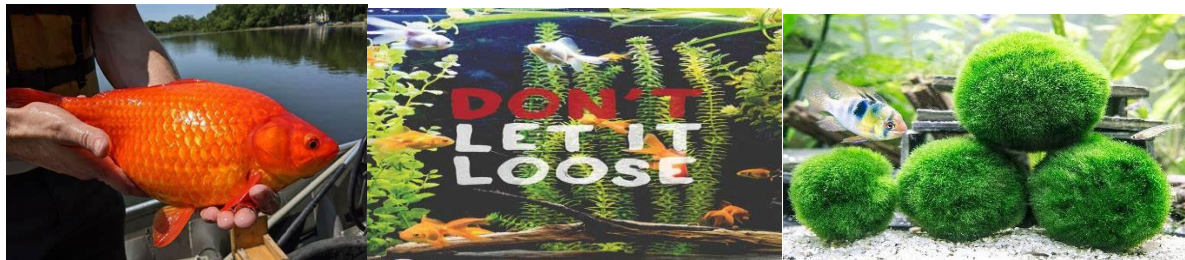
Dutch Elm Disease

Do Not Transport Firewood

Elm Bark Beetle

Don't Let it Loose

Goldfish are a common pet in aquariums. When people get tired of their fish, though, many have considered releasing them into lakes and streams. Goldfish can survive and disrupt our environment, so it is not recommended to let them loose, but rather return them to the pet store where purchased. That also applies to moss balls. Some of these balls have been found to contain zebra mussels, which, if released in Alberta, could be an environmental disaster on our lakes.



Released oversized goldfish

Don't let it Loose Program

Aquarium moss balls

Clean, Drain and Dry your Boat.

Boating is an activity that can spread invasive species. Not only can zebra and quagga mussels be transported on uncleaned watercraft, but also the devastating Eurasian water milfoil, the exclusionary phragmites, and the invasive Prussian carp. These carp have been found in the Red Deer and North Saskatchewan watershed, so it is critical that, even if you are just moving your boat from a river to a nearby lake, clean, drain and dry it.



Prussian Carp

Clean Drain Dry Your Boat

Eurasian Watermilfoil

If You Don't Know, Now You Know:

Gardeners often are offered attractive species in the form of seeds or plant fragments. Emergent species have often been moved from one shore to line the edges of a pond or water feature. Many of the species can take over a lakeshore, ending the biodiversity and use of that water's edge. If you do not have full knowledge of what you might be bringing in to your pond, just don't to it. Some of these invasive ornamental species include yellow flag iris, flowering rush, Himalayan balsam, and purple loosestrife.



Yellow Flag Iris

Himalayan Balsam

Flowering Rush

Purple Loosestrife

Don't go cray-cray with your fish bait.

The northern crayfish is native to the Beaver River system, where it is often collected and being used as bait for sport fishing in that area. But that river system is where it needs to stay. Bringing it back in your tacklebox or wet well then letting it loose in other water ecosystems could potentially cause major disruption. This applied to all live bait, do not let any of it loose in any aquatic ecosystem.



Northern Crayfish

Live bait.

All of these species and more were featured at the 2023 AISC conference. Continued updates on the battles against invasive species of all types will occur as successes and failures are noted.