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JUNE 2019 | Vol. 105 No. 6



FIRST CUT! Jared de Dood of Sunninghill Holsteins made short work of a hay field in Enderby on the May long weekend. The month started with record-breaking heat across much of the province, increasing the forest fire risk to high for much of the South Coast and Central Interior. A return to more seasonal and wetter conditions by mid-month was a welcomed relief for farmers, ranchers and the BC Wildfire Service. [CATHY GLOVER PHOTO]

Hog farm won't face charges

Police ask farmers to be vigilant

by **PETER MITHAM**

ABBOTSFORD – BC SPCA is declining to press charges against an Abbotsford hog farm targeted by animal rights activists.

Representatives of the association, which is responsible under the province's Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act to investigate complaints and enforce laws related to animal welfare, visited the farm in

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Okanagan drives land values

by **PETER MITHAM**

VERNON – Okanagan farmland outstrips the rest of Canada in average price per acre, according to the 2018 farmland values report from Farm Credit Canada.

The report says the average price of farmland in the region rose 6.4% to \$97,903 an acre in 2018.

"[The] Okanagan region saw substantial demand, even for smaller parcels," it states, noting that vineyard development was a key driver as wineries continued to seek

fruit to support growing sales.

"The tree fruit sector continued to be a significant part of Okanagan agriculture but played a lesser role in the land market in 2018," the report adds.

However, local brokers say orchardists continue to be active, driving up the price of irrigated land typically used for forage.

"Orchards are moving into the north Okanagan, pushing ... forage land up to orchard land values as you see in the south, central Okanagan," says

Pat Duggan, a former dairy farmer now an agent with Royal LePage Downtown Realty Ltd. in Vernon.

"Traditionally, if you have irrigated land at \$13,000 to \$15,000 per acre, and then the orchard people come in, they're willing to pay \$20,000 to \$25,000 an acre, so that puts pressure on forage producers."

By the same token, FCC reports that the maximum asking price for property in the Okanagan fell in 2018,

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