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# COUNTRY LIFE IN BC

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## Province expands slaughter licences

More changes promised to strengthen sector

by TOM WALKER

PORT ALBERNI – The BC Ministry of Agriculture has announced the opening of three new regions for class D on-farm slaughter licences.

Farmers within the Regional District of Alberni-Clayoquot, as well as electoral area D in Central Kootenay and electoral area H in Fraser-Fort George Regional District, will now be eligible to apply for class D licenses.

While consumers are more attuned to the security and advantages of a local meat

See NEW on next page ➔



## Blue streak

BC blueberries have 10 days to make it from field to market in top shape, says Rhonda Driediger of Driediger Farms in Langley. She says growers need to work with packers to ensure they get top value for their fruit. High quality is the key for BC growers as rising global production makes for more competitive times and pushes down prices. Speakers this past winter encouraged growers to renew their fields with berries that deliver value in the fresh market. See story on page 13. PHOTO / RONDA PAYNE

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## Mexico launches SAWP review

by PETER MITHAM

ABBOTSFORD – BC farm leaders have pledged to work with the federal government and Mexico to overhaul the Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program.

Mexico announced June 21 that it had reached an agreement with Canada to ensure its citizens participating in SAWP remained safe while working in Canada. The deal establishes a committee with representation from Canada's federal ministries responsible

for employment, health, immigration and agriculture, as well as Mexico's ministries of labour and foreign affairs.

The intergovernmental group will identify risks, address complaints and take immediate action to protect SAWP participants. Canada will support Mexico's efforts to identify high-risk farms, ensure timely access to health care and review instances where workers have been put at risk.

Provincial authorities will also be involved, with a key area being education of employers regarding their

responsibilities.

Reg Ens, executive director of the BC Agriculture Council, which administers SAWP in BC through the Western Agriculture Labour Initiative, says industry is prepared to assist with any changes Mexico requests.

"The government of Mexico is very concerned about their workers," he says. "We're supporting them."

WALI has been asked for information, which it's providing, and it's also reminding growers to follow

See SAWP on next page ➔

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