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Grain prices hit chicken growers

Insolvencies likely

PETER MITHAM

ABBOTSFORD – Dramatic increases in grain prices mean many BC chicken growers face insolvency after a year of devastating weather events and scant progress on a new pricing formula.

Driven by global demand and drought across much of western North America last year, feed prices rose dramatically last fall. By November 15, when the latest production period began, broiler producers and others in BC were paying more than \$650 a tonne, just as a series of intense storms

See FEED on next page ↗



Farmers helping farmers

When flooding hit Sumas Prairie after heavy rains in November, Abbotsford poultry farmers and experienced firefighters Krista Harris, left, and her wife, Cathy Van-Martin, jumped into action to help with the emergency response. Their story starts on page 19. *SUBMITTED*

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Groundwater deadline firm

PETER MITHAM

VICTORIA – The province is holding fast on a March 1 deadline for existing, non-domestic groundwater users to apply for a licence despite a low response rate.

Staff from the BC Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resources Operations and Rural Development have been making the rounds of farm meetings since last fall, with the result that 4,455 applications are now in the hands of government. A total of 1,654 decisions have been made.

With existing users set to lose their water rights if they don't apply by March 1, calls are growing for the province to extend the deadline for a final time to ensure users maintain legal access to groundwater and their historic water rights.

"With only one in five historical groundwater users having applied for continued use, there are thousands of farmers, ranchers, and small business owners currently at risk of losing their access to groundwater," BC Liberals interim leader Shirley Bond

said in December in a statement backed by the BC Green party leader Sonia Furstenuau.

The province expects 20,000 wells to seek licences, of which approximately 8,000 are for agricultural uses. While farmers and ranchers have a relatively high application rate, many are frustrated by an application process many growers find don't reflect their circumstances.

A key issue is licensing to

See USERS on next page ↗

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