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Lettuce grow!

Matt and Selena Lawrence know two heads are better than one in life and in business as they work to establish a hydroponic greenhouse in Cumberland producing four types of lettuce. The small-scale operation was ideal for the growing family, and makes efficient use of water resources to produce 2,000 heads of lettuce a week. Read their story on page 29. *FOREST VALLEY ACRES*

Turning off the taps

Illegal water use targeted

PETER MITHAM

DUNCAN – Record-low water levels in streams and aquifers across the province have prompted the BC Ministry of Forests to crack down on illegal water use as drought conditions intensify.

Several farms on southern Vancouver Island reported visits by natural resource officers the week of July 18, days after the province elevated Vancouver Island to Level 5, the most severe of the province's drought ratings.

"It looks like they're going after non-licensed users, which is what we would expect them

Farmers urged ▶

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Drought threatens feed supply

PETER MITHAM

TAYLOR — Ranchers and livestock producers took it on the chin in 2021 and into 2022 as the heat dome then drought curtailed forage production in the Interior and on the Prairies.

A repeat performance is shaping up this year, with low moisture levels on the Prairies set to reduce yields of feed grains. This will boost pressure on producers in BC, where hay production is down by half in many regions and grains were at a pivotal moment heading

into August.

"There definitely is going to be challenges with the drought," says Jennifer Critcher, who farms near Taylor, just west of Dawson Creek.

Critcher says she's never seen it this dry this early in the season. While row crops are holding on, the prospect of an extended period of hot, dry weather is raising worries.

"We just don't know what that's going to look like going forward," she says.

On July 14, BC followed Saskatchewan's lead and

announced a higher writeoff level for grain and oilseeds so low-yielding crops could be used for livestock feed without impacting insurance benefits.

But even the diversion of subpar grains won't fully cover the needs of livestock producers, many of whom are selling off animals to avoid having to feed them.

"Unfortunately, the feed shortage is not unique to British Columbia and is being felt throughout western Canada," the province said.

Feed shortage ▶

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