...FROM THE DESK OF
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CCA 4R

Between the Rows

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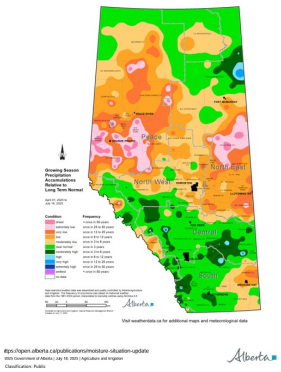
Current Moisture Situation

I don't want to be Captain Obvious, but its dry out there. As many of you know, I'm an optimist. I believe it's a pre-requisite for an Agronomist to be an optimist. Always trying to find a positive outlook to bring to farmers, however this year has been especially difficult to maintain that optimism. Now don't get me wrong, I still believe there are some good crops out there, but this July is testing my positive outlook.

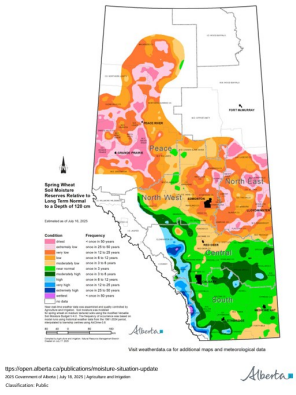
I've included 2 maps here, 2025 Growing Season Precipitation Accumulation Relative to and Soil Moisture Reserves Relative to Normal. They are small, blurry and hard to read (on purpose), but suffice to say there's a whole lotta yellow and orange here. If you want to read the actual report its here: Agricultural Moisture Situation Update July 18, 2025



July is normally our wettest month, however as of today the Fort Vermilion weather station has only received 7.6mm of rain, over half coming on July 3rd. The average for Fort Vermilion is 39mm. So we do have some catching up to do.

Would 32mm (1.25") make a difference in this year's crop? Well, yes and no. If we get a good chunk of it soon, while the canola is still flowering it will help. However for peas and most cereal fields it probably wont.

The only good thing I have for you is our temperatures. Last year by this date we had 7 days over 30C. This year only one.



What's Next: Berthas?

It's been a while since my last BTR. It's not that I haven't wanted to do one but I've been extremely busy scouting for clover cutworms. More on them in my main story. However I need to make clear that the worms we've been seeing in our fields so far has not been Bertha Armyworms.

Bertha Armyworms larvae generally are not seen in our canola until the last week of July and the first week of August. The difference between the two species is slight (pink versus orange stripe), and I just want to make sure growers know that even if they have had to spray for clover cutworms, that doesn't mean we can let our guard down. The Berthas may still be coming, or at least their egg-laying moth form. Unfortunately the closest phenome traps we have are in Hawk Hills (a situation I will rectify next year), So we are operating a bit in the dark here. The last two years have seen a slight uptick in numbers in fields, but high levels of fungal and insect predators have followed suit, so few fields last year were sprayed specifically for Berthas. However adequate monitoring will be required over the next few weeks.

Agronomy Focus: Clover Cutworm

Clover Cutworm

Trichogrammididae
Trichrogramma spp.

My main topic this week is the Clover Cutworm, otherwise known as "that dang worm everyone's spraying for this year". Clover cutworm, *Discestra trifolii* is a little studied pest that feeds on canola, mustard, flax, clover and some forages. We in the Peace are the only area lucky enough to have economic level damage done by this pest. Clover cutworms are a special type of cutworm called a climbing cutworm, which means they feed on foliage above ground. Most other cutworms we have in the Peace are subterranean feeders. They also have the unique ability to have a second generation, however usually a second generation emerges in late September when they cause little economic harm.

Mature larvae are said to be up to 40mm (1.5") long, mainly green coloured, but can be black, with a brown head. Basically identical to the Bertha Armyworm except that on the striping on the side includes a pinkish stripe, whereas on the Bertha the stripe is orangish. Clover cutworm moths lay eggs singularly on the underside of the leaf, while Bertha's are laid in clusters. Feeding damage starts on the underside of the leaves, but as the larvae mature they move up to the top of the plant and feed on all parts.

Scouting is done much the same way as Bertha's and the economic threshold for clover cutworm is unknown, so we use the same 10 -20/m^2 as for Berthas (which I find too high).

There are natural viral diseases that can reduce populations and *Trichogramma minutum* has been known to parasitize the eggs.

Chemical control should be done with a foliar treatment in the early morning or late evening when larvae are most actively feeding near the tops of the crop.

That's the all the official information we have on the clover cutworm. Now for some of my observations. I recall back in the early 2000's scouting a field near 7 mile corner that had clover cutworms, the first time I'd seen them. The field had been in canola for at least 7 years in a row and part of the field had been completely defoliated, the clover cutworms had then moved through a cereal field then into alfalfa, feeding all along the way. When I started scouting for CropMaxx in 2022 I found them again in a few headlands of canola. Just a few, feeding on the sparse canola in the compacted areas. The next 2 years I found a few more, now in scattered patches of thinner crop, like hilltops and slide slopes, usually not enough to warrant spraying. Then this spring we found lots more damage, especially in drought stressed areas. Areas where we had found only a few or none at all a few days before, completely defoliated. Areas from 20ft^2 to several acres, necessitating spraying.

One good thing we discovered was a few cutworms hanging dead from the tops of canola plants. A sign that fungal or viral diseases are present.

Going forward I want to try to learn more from our experiences with clover cutworms this year and since there isn't much research done on them I will be asking all of you to contribute. I will be sending out a questionnaire, asking for thing like seeding date, depth, tillage practices, fertility etc. on the field that both had clover cutworm issues and those that did not. Maybe we can all work together to try and cobble some insight into clover cutworms and be better prepared for them in the future. So watch for questionnaire and please reply. The information I gather will be confidential but aggregated together to look for possible trends.

2026 Soil Sampling Packages

Farming is Fun

2026 Soil Sampling Packages

As we approach harvest 2025 need to start thinking about the 2026 crop. Planning for a successful 2026 crop, starts now. A big key to big yields and improved profitability is soil testing. Soil testing allows you to accurately determine nutrient levels and balances in each field. That way you can accurately determine your nutrient needs and spend your fertilizer dollar more efficiently. Our 2026 soil testing program will begin as soon as the soil cools down and we will be offering the same packages as last year, both the NutriScan instant results and A&L Lab tested results. Please call either of our Offices or myself directly to book your acres now.

Farming is Fun