

MEDIA BACKGROUNDER – MOWING AND HAY SALVAGE ACTIVITIES

What Ministry ditch mowing activities are taking place this year?

- A new pilot project starting June 7, which is done by Ministry contractors.
- Annual hay salvage activities around July, which is done by producers, who can harvest this material for free.
- Regular maintenance mowing work done every summer starting July 15 and ending Oct. 15, which is done by Ministry contractors.

Why is the Ministry introducing this new pilot mowing project?

- The intention is to help reduce wildlife and vehicle collisions, control weeds and enhance aesthetics for tourism areas, while complimenting existing mowing activities and still allowing producers the opportunity to salvage hay for free.
- By starting this pilot project June 7, the intention is to improve the sight lines of motorists earlier in the year and give them more time to react to wildlife.
- The Ministry will evaluate the pilot project during the winter.

Will producers salvage less hay from the ditch because of this pilot project?

- The Ministry is balancing the needs of public safety, aesthetics and the opportunity to salvage free hay from public land.
- A four-metre wide swath along the highway shoulder is being mowed as part of this pilot project in June, while the rest of the vegetation will remain. By the time hay salvage activities begin around July, the mowing in June of the four-metre wide area should have started growing back. However, in some cases, hay salvage yields for producer may decrease.

Is anything changing with the hay salvage deadline because of this pilot project?

- No. Starting on July 8, anyone may cut and bale the hay or grass in a highway ditch without contacting or getting the permission of the nearby landowner, lessee or designate, providing a harvest hasn't started already.
- These deadlines and guidelines are designed to give everyone an equal opportunity to harvest this material from Crown land. Before July 8, a landowner, lessee or designate near a highway ditch had the first option to cut or bale this material. Hay must be cut at a uniform height leaving a neat appearance.
- Bales of hay must be at least eight metres from the edge of the shoulder of a highway and must be removed from the highway right-of-way by Aug. 8. To minimize hazards to the travelling public, bales that are not removed by Aug. 8 or are too close to the shoulder may be removed by the Ministry.