

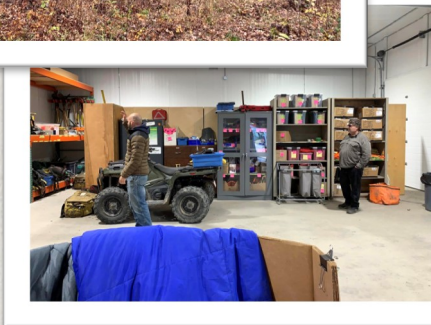
FARMED Hosts Wildfire Resilience Tour for Agriculture Producers

**By Heloise Dixon-Warren, RPF
Moose Meadows Farm**

On Saturday, October 16th, FARMED hosted the second tour of our Tour and Workshop Series with funding under the Knowledge and Technology Transfer Program. A group of small lot agriculture producers and interested persons accompanied Ted Traer, RPF (Ret), LFR (Local Fire Smart Representative) on a 6 hour tour discussing FireSmart practices and visiting sites within the North Cariboo where FireSmarting has been implemented. While the tour was small with a total of 8 participants, it was both engaging and informative. The tour participants from across the North Cariboo in addition to Prince George and Soda Creek.



The tour met at the Quesnel Visitor Information Centre at 9 am and departed there sharply at 9:30 am. The first stop was the Fuel Mitigation Trails located along the Quesnel-Hixon Road adjacent to the Quesnel Airport. This site is within the Municipality of Quesnel's borders and was determined to be one of 34 sites identified as needing to be treated for wildfire risk under the CWPP / [Community Wildfire Protection Plan](#). The site provides an excellent example of what a shaded fuel break looks like. Techniques such as pruning, thinning debris removal, using goats for follow up treatment have been used to reduce wildfire risk. From a forest management perspective, the site resembles more what it would have looked like if wildfires had been allowed to burn on a regular basis. Without fire suppression, the site would have experienced regular low intensity burns.



The second site visited was the Quesnel Fire Zone operated by BCWS (BC Wildfire Service). Our host at the centre was Matt Duran who is an Operations Specialist based out of the Quesnel Fire Zone and a FireSmart Educator. While at the centre, Matt shared with the tour participants information on BCWS' role in fighting wildfires, the centre's capacity, and resources, and how the home / property owner has an important role in increasing the likelihood their home / outbuildings may survive a wildfire if they practice FireSmarting.

The third site was the home of FARMED member, Lynda and Bill Atkinson at Sisters Creek Simmentals in Kersley. During the 2017 fires, Green Mountain located southeast of Quesnel and east of Kersley experienced a dry lightning strike igniting the Green Mountain Fire (C10685) that despite aerial attacks and ground crews was hard to contain. Lynda and Bill's farm and home was put on "Evacuation Alert" which meant they would need to be ready to leave on short notice should the alert be elevated to an "Evacuation Order". Orders are mandatory and are enforced by local authorities or the RCMP. Along a 2 km. stretch of road the total number of horses was 50 and cattle 300 head. One can imagine the complexities of evacuating the area and the only option was to move them towards Highway 97. During the fire, the Atkinson's plough a fuel break in their hay fields and since 2017, the Atkinsons have implemented some firesmart strategies including the replacement of siding on their house with non-flammable Hardy Board and a metal roof.



The last stop on the tour was Moose Meadows Farm, the home of Ted, our host, and FARMED Chair, Heloise Dixon-Warren. In 2018, their farm was on Alert due to the Narcosli Creek Fire (C12302) which was located south-west of Bouchie Lake where the farm is located. The farm is home to 6 horses / ponies, 20 alpacas, 3 donkeys, and a variety of smaller animals (goats, sheep, chickens). In 2018, Heloise and Ted moved the horses and donkeys to a friend's place in Beverly, west of Prince George and were on standby should they need to move the alpacas also. Both Ted and Heloise are Foresters and have the LFR Training and have been fire smarting their property over the past 5-6 years. The FireSmart practices being implemented include debris clean up and pruning and most recently, the replacement of extremely flammable siding (e.g. cedar shingles), the addition of soffits to the deck, and flashing along the exterior walls of outbuildings and gravel. This year, Heloise and Ted accessed funding under the "[Extreme Weather Preparedness for Agriculture Program](#)" managed by the Ministry of Agriculture.



At the very end of the tour, the group enjoyed coffee and cookies in the heated workshop at Moose Meadows Farm while watching some FireSmart Videos and highlighting some important FireSmart concepts around structures. Feedback forms were completed and everyone went home with ideas of ponder and smiles.



This story has been produced by FARMED for your enjoyment!

