

# Attention Beef Producers - Stay Connected!



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In today's fast-paced lifestyle, a moment of peace and quiet is rare and usually comes at the time of day when you have a minute to sit down at the computer to read and send a few e-mails. In light of this modern-day trend, Saskatchewan Agriculture's Livestock Development Specialists from across the province are communicating with clients in a new and very effective way. E-mail has become one of the most used methods of communication in the modern world, and is increasingly being used by many of our rural clients as a means of staying in touch with family, friends and now the latest beef industry markets, news and events.

Beef producers on the Stay Connected e-mail lists receive:

- weekly cattle market updates
- notices of beef and forage meetings, seminars and tours
- latest industry news and views
- provincial and federal program announcements and details

In light of the fact that the majority of our rural clients are on a dial-up system for receiving e-mails, most communication will come in a text format with, when possible, a reference to a website to download more detailed information at their own discretion.

For those clients who do not use e-mail on a regular basis, a regular mail-out is used to disseminate information about upcoming events, seminars and tours.

If you would like to be included on our e-mail or mailing list in order to stay connected to the beef industry locally and abroad, please contact your local Saskatchewan Agriculture Livestock Development Specialist. Please note that your e-mail and mailing address will be kept confidential and will not be shared with other subscribers or sold to online solicitors.

#### FOR MORE INFORMATION

- To find your local Saskatchewan Agriculture Livestock Development Specialist, visit [www.agriculture.gov.sk.ca](http://www.agriculture.gov.sk.ca). Click on Directory | Ministries | Agriculture | Livestock Development Branch | Livestock Services.



## FOOD PACKAGING MATERIALS AND THE ENVIRONMENT



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Food processors and agricultural producers trying to market their product have many food packaging choices. Some new technologies and a few familiar ones are providing processors with a method to get food products to consumers in a safe, environmentally friendly manner. Because packaging plays a critical role in food processing this is an important consideration for the food processor.

The first role of the package is to protect the product from contamination and maintain the product's shelf life. The package must also attract the consumer and can be used to educate the consumer about the product. Today's consumers are more concerned about the environment and the demand for reducing or eliminating waste is increasing. Companies can use *green* packaging as a marketing tool, especially if their target market includes the health conscious, environmentally concerned consumer.

There are several different types of *green* packaging – three will be reviewed in this article. One group is those made with recycled materials or those that are recyclable. Examples of recyclable materials include: glass, aluminum, cardboard, paper and some plastics. The main challenge with these packaging materials is getting them to the recycling depots. Although curbside recycling programs and green boxes are becoming more common, only a low percentage of these products are actually recycled.

The second type of green packaging technology includes degradable materials. Degradable packaging materials fall into two categories; biodegradable and compostable plastics.



Clear biodegradable plastic (Evlon) made from corn.

Compostable plastics will break down in a commercial or industrial composter but not in a landfill. It is important for processors and consumers to understand that the plastic must be put into a composter for the product to properly degrade.

Biodegradable packaging is broken down by micro-organisms into water, carbon dioxide and organic matter. Again, these materials must be placed under the proper conditions for biodegradation to occur.

Bio-plastics are the third technology available in the market. These are plastics that are made from a renewable source (e.g. corn starch, soybean oil, hemp oil). It is important to understand that not all bio-plastics will degrade and not all degradable plastics are made from a renewable source.

Processors choosing to use a *green* packaging material need to inform themselves about the right material for their product and ways to market the package feature to the consumer. Processors should ask themselves:

- Will the packaging material meet a recognized *green* standard?
- How long does it take to biodegrade or what

is the compostable time frame?

- Can the package be appropriately recycled or degraded?

As consumers become more concerned about the environment, the use of *green* packaging materials may increase. It is important that processors understand the products available on the market and determine which packaging material best fits their product and market.

#### FOR MORE INFORMATION

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