

Invasive Species Update

In March, the Alberta Invasive Species Council held a very successful conference in Olds at the Olds College. The take home message from this conference was that Albertans cannot let their guard down when it comes to alien species invading our pristine environment. Here are several invaders and various campaigns highlighted at the conference:

Squeal on Pigs

Invasive wild boar at large and hybrid pigs appear to be increasing in Alberta. They can damage crops and landscapes. They are elusive and often times, only the damage caused by wild boar may be noticed. If you see unexplained disturbed land, contact AF.wildboar@gov.ab.ca or call 310.FARM to report this damage.



Understand your grass.

Many lakeshore cottagers are keen to see a thick, green lawn and are tempted to seed or sod down as close to the shore as possible. In order for them to ensure invasive annual grasses such as downy brome or Japanese brome do not take a foothold on lake areas, cottagers need to ensure their sod or seed does not contain invasive species by asking their suppliers if their products are invasive-free. As well, too much nitrogen fertilizer can leach into the water, when fertilizing your shoreline grasses, which can enhance devastating algae blooms in lake areas.



Down brome riparian infestation



Algae bloom

Burn it Where you Buy It

Firewood can contain invasive insects like emerald ash borer or harbor invasive tree diseases such as Dutch Elm Disease (DED). Don't get caught with DED when buying firewood further than 80 km from where you originally purchased it! Always burn it where you buy it and do not return to your Summer Village with it to avoid the spread of invasive insects and diseases.



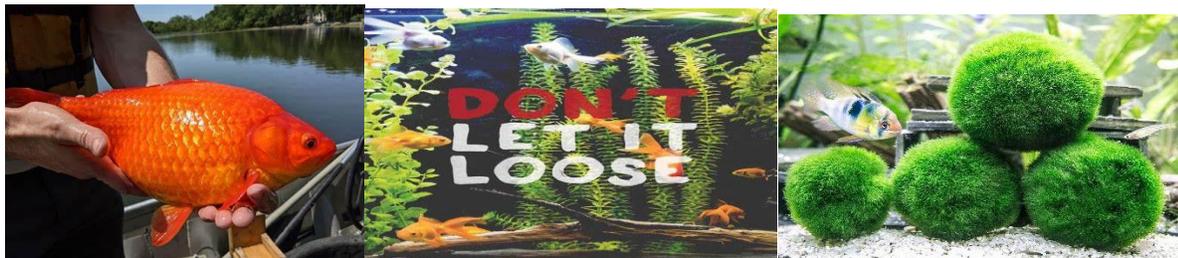
Dutch Elm Disease

Do Not Transport Firewood

Elm Bark Beetle

Don't Let it Loose

Goldfish are a common pet in aquariums. When people get tired of their fish many have considered releasing them into lakes and streams, however this is illegal! Goldfish can survive in less than ideal conditions and disrupt our environments. If an aquarium pet or plant is no longer wanted, please return them to the pet store where purchased or donate them to a school, aquarium group, community organization or a rescue society. That also applies to aquarium moss balls. Some of these balls have been found to contain zebra mussels, which, if released in Alberta, could be an environmental disaster to our lakes.



Released oversized goldfish

Don't let it Loose Program

Aquarium moss balls

Clean, Drain and Dry your Boat.

Recreational activities, such as boating can spread invasive species. Not only can zebra and quagga mussels be transported on uncleaned watercrafts and undrained bilges or equipment, but aquatic species such as Eurasian water milfoil, the exclusionary phragmites, and the invasive Prussian carp can be transported to new areas. In specific, Prussian carp have been found in the Red Deer and North Saskatchewan watershed, so it is critical that, even if you are just moving your boat from a river to a nearby lake, to always clean, drain and dry any gear that comes in contact with the water.



Prussian Carp

Clean Drain Dry Your Boat

Eurasian Watermilfoil

If You Don't Know, Now You Know:

Gardeners often are offered attractive species in the form of seeds or plant fragments. Emergent species have often been moved from one shore to line the edges of a pond or water feature. Many of the species can take over a lakeshore, ending the biodiversity and use of that water's edge. If you do not have full knowledge of what you might be bringing in to your pond, now you know to not do it. Some of these invasive ornamental species include yellow flag iris, flowering rush, Himalayan balsam, and purple loosestrife, and can all be found in Alberta.



Yellow Flag Iris

Himalayan Balsam

Flowering Rush

Purple Loosestrife

Don't go cray-cray with your fish bait.

The northern crayfish is native to the Beaver River system, where it is often collected and used as bait for sport fishing in that area. But that river system is where it needs to stay. Bringing it back in your tacklebox or wet well and letting it loose in other water ecosystems could potentially cause major disruption. This applies to all live bait! It is illegal to let any bait loose in aquatic ecosystem.



Northern Crayfish

Live bait.

All of these species and more were featured at the 2023 AISC conference. Continued updates on the battles against invasive species of all types will occur as successes and failures are noted—stay up to date with the AISC and join their newsletter or follow their social medial accounts on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter, @ABinvasives!