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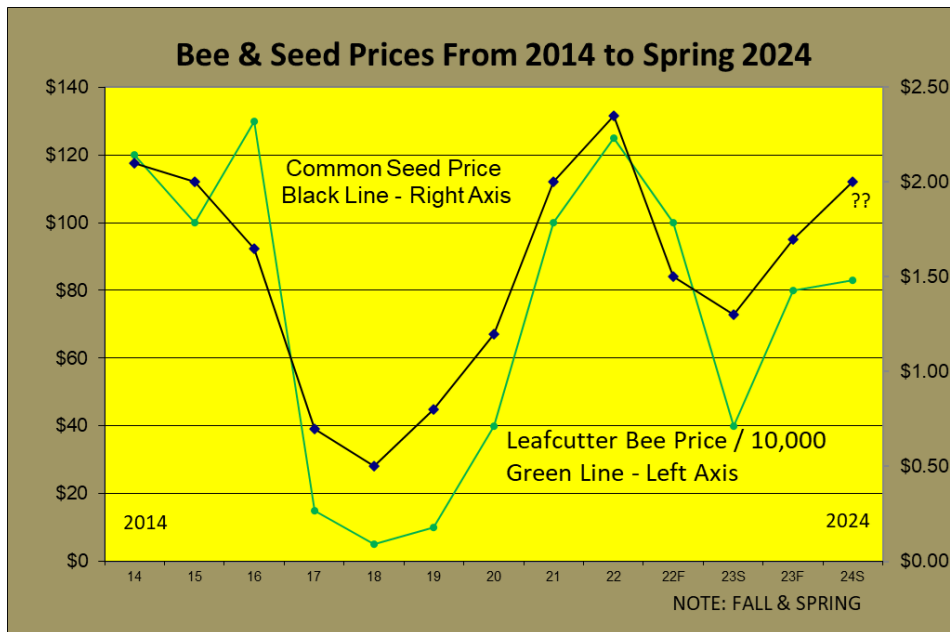
# *Pask Farms Ltd.*

## Spring Newsletter 2024

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### PRICE FLUCTUATIONS



#### ALFALFA SEED PRICE COMEBACK:

Wow! In the spring of 2023, it was hard to find a buyer for common alfalfa seed. The last we bought was for \$1.30 per pound. Six months later it firmed up to about \$1.70/lb, and has crept up a bit all winter. Suddenly, this spring, everyone seems to be looking for alfalfa seed.

#### What Happened?

First, the accountants were in charge. Money tied up in seed inventory and storage costs, plus interest was red ink on the spreadsheet. The answer: Stop Production - like the auto industry.

**Next**, There has been lots of seed movement. From the Seed Grower to the Processor to the Marketing Groups to the Hay Grower. This occurred in the USA, Canada, Europe and China. Amazing, but farmers still want to grow alfalfa.

**Last**, the combination of the production cutbacks and increased sales depleted the warehouse. No problem, let's order some more alfalfa seed in. But it's not like ordering more auto parts.

#### YOU DON'T "MAKE" ALFALFA SEED:

Suddenly, the salesman is in charge. You need to find experienced growers, with the right ground and some leafcutter bees. In Canada, it's like elephants making babies—two years to get results.

#### THE PUSH FOR ACRES:

In both Canada and the USA, everyone is your friend. Everyone needs acres. The pool of experienced growers has shrunk considerably over the years. Plus those leafcutter bees are a pile of work. So the offers get better. And here we go again. When you're going uphill on the roller coaster, it's hard to see what's over the top. Keep your head up.

#### CONTRACT PRICES:

Our contracts have netted the grower about \$2.15 / lb in their pocket for their 2022 and 2023 crops. This year the contract pricing is better yet for both Certified and VNS seed. We are stretching our acres more than usual to take advantage of the market situation.

## LEAFCUTTER BEE MARKETS

Bee prices crashed for the 2022 bee crop, came up back up to \$75 to \$85 for the 2023 crop. We thought bee prices would be even higher, but no one wants to risk not selling their bees. You either fly them or sell them,



Thanks Donna

so prices vary widely from year to year. Buyers are alfalfa seed growers, hybrid canola pollinators, and blueberry growers. The crystal ball says this group should need more bees from your 2024 bee crop. Think higher \$.

## PARASITES:

Vapona is no longer legal in Canada. The government has put leafcutter beekeepers in a difficult spot. Beekeepers rely on some combination of tight boxes, black lights, spraying Konk, and possibly old Vapona.

Some beekeepers mix Cinnamon, Cloves or Turmeric powders into their trays. The plan is to repel the parasite larva from the trays before they sting any bee larva. We did extensive testing in 2023, including incubating 1% parasite bees for a 100 acre field using powders. Results to date are sketchy to poor. We are planning even more testing in 2024.

Our leafcutter bee industry has suffered lately from the lack of innovative bee research yielding usable results. We are hoping that Dr. Gail MacInnis can turn the corner on this.

## INSECTS IN SEED PRODUCTION:

2023 was a great year for alfalfa weevils, plant bugs and lygus bugs. Our tools are getting limited by government restrictions and insect building pesticide resistance through over use on our part. The tools are:

**Spring Burning** - good control on all three of these pests but really hard on the nerves.

**Coragen** - Doesn't seem to have any effect on bees, but really effective on alfalfa weevil larva. One grower said he thought he had control on grasshoppers as well.

**Dimethoate** - Good on lygus and plant bug, but close to zero on weevils.

**Matador/Silencer** - growers are seeing lots of bug resistance to this insecticide

## CLOVERS, CANOLA, CLEAVERS, KOCHIA

These are the four gunmen at the seed plant corral. If we leave them in your seed, they are killers for our customers. Use all your tools, and save Authority type products for alfalfa seed. Resistance will come quick enough without using these products on your wheat crops.

**AUTOMATION:** We always try to make things easier, faster and use less labor. This is an automated bagging and palletizer installed this summer in our seed plant.

Technology Rules.



***"It's OK to have chaff in your seed, but don't put your seed in the chaff"***

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