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BC leads AI case count

Bird flu soars on FV farms

PETER MITHAM

ABBOTSFORD – Biosecurity by itself was not enough to protect Fraser Valley poultry farms from an ongoing outbreak of highly pathogenic avian influenza last month.

Cases surged in the closing weeks of 2022, with dozens of commercial farms in the Fraser Valley testing positive for the disease. As of December 15, nearly 2.7 million birds on 67 commercial farms had been affected. This is more than anywhere else in Canada this year, and exceeds the 42 BC farms infected in 2004 that led to valley-wide depopulation.

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Winter harvest

A blanket of snow doesn't always mean the end of harvest for BC vegetable farmers and some, like Apple Quill Farm in Wycliffe, are able to extend their fresh market sales until well after the first snow flies. See story on page 31. *MICHAEL ALBERT*

Eby appoints new ag minister

PETER MITHAM

VICTORIA – Abbotsford-Mission MLA Pam Alexis is the province's new agriculture minister following a cabinet shuffle that saw her replace Lana Popham, who had held the role since 2017.

"I have big shoes to fill," says Alexis, a first-term MLA who previously served as mayor of Mission.

Alexis says she was invited to serve less than 48 hours prior to the swearing in of the new cabinet on December 7. "I was just tickled pink. I

was absolutely honoured, and so pumped," she said of the appointment. "I was really, really excited and honoured, but again knowing that I have big shoes to fill."

Just six ministers retained the portfolios assigned by former premier John Horgan, while 85% of the government caucus received cabinet positions.

Eby's mandate letters to ministers prioritize the province's ongoing response to COVID-19 and climate-related natural disasters, as well as reconciliation with

Indigenous peoples. He identifies housing, safety, health care and addressing climate change as key areas for action.

Alexis' letter identifies her priorities as food security and protecting the Agricultural Land Reserve, which marks its 50th anniversary this year.

"Your job will be to support farmers, ranchers, and seafood producers in the critical work they do for all of us, to ensure food security for British Columbians by

See SHUFFLE on next page ↪

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