

# PHEASANTS FOREVER NEWS

FALL ISSUE  
2025

PHEASANTS FOREVER **CALGARY** NEWSLETTER  
Created for our members by our members





# DIRECTORS INVITATIONAL



The winning team - **Shoot Happens**. Congratulations to (l to r): Dave Scott, Bob Merkley, Scott Price, Nick Stanford and Bob Logan.

The 22nd Annual Auspice Capital Directors Invitational was held on Thursday, September 11th at the AHEIA Calgary Firearms Centre at DeWinton. The event is garnering a reputation as one of the classiest events in the shooting sports and somehow is always blessed with exceptionally beautiful weather and the trend continued this year as we had another gorgeous late summer day. Bob Gruzecki, along with his capable staff and helpful volunteers ensured the day went off without a hitch.

The Calcutta was a big hit as usual with over \$10,000 generated in bidding for teams. Mike Mannas won the Calcutta for the third straight year while Pheasants Forever President Scott Price won the second-place team for the 2nd year in a row. Ron McConnell picked lucky team number 7 to round off the winnings.

After the Calcutta the shoot began. The competition is one round of Trap, one round of Trap Doubles and one round of Skeet.

The winning team was **Shoot Happens**, who have been second place for the last 2 shoots. Congratulations to Bob Merkley, Nick Stanford, Bob Logan, Scott Price and David Scott for getting back to the top. Congratulations to Cinco Pendejos for their second place finish. Good

work as well to the Stavely Elks team for their 3rd place finish. Finally, congratulations to Drew Shaw for being the top Individual shooter of the day.

Another great meal and great event thanks to the folks from Great Events.

After auctioning off a handful of items we ended the evening with the draw for the [Summer Upland Raffle](#). Congratulations to Jon Dick who won the Caesar Guerini 28ga. shotgun.

Thanks to Bill Brown of Elevate Auctions, Derek Hallgrimson, Jalen Hult, Deana Schmuland, Nicole Borghese & Terri and Laurette for their tremendous support.

Thanks as well to Bob Merkley and Blackstone Drilling Fluids for providing the cigars - a favourite amongst the attendees. It was another first class, high energy, warm & friendly event. A special thanks to **Auspice Capital** for their continued sponsorship.





A beautiful day at the AHEIA Calgary Firearms Centre.



Directors Invitational 2025 **TOP SHOOTER** goes to Drew Shaw.



Draw was made for the **Summer Upland Special Raffle** - Perry presents winner, Jon Dick (right) with his new shotgun.



**AUSPICE CAPITAL** has been a staunch supporter of the Directors Invitational event for a number of years. **Thank you for your continued support!**



# FIRST PHEASANT MENTOR HUNT

## @Spruce Creek Upland Club

**7th**  
ANNUAL



An amazing group of new pheasant hunters!

The 7th Annual First Pheasant Mentor Hunt took place on Saturday, September 27 at the Spruce Creek Upland Club. This was the first of two such events this fall offering folks who've never hunted pheasants a shot at their first birds.

Each hunt is designed to match a real-life pheasant hunt. The session featured two mentees with a mentor and a dog handler and eight liberated rooster pheasants. At the end of the 4 sessions exactly half of the 48 birds were bagged, cleaned and went home with the mentees for cooking.

Aside from the hunt, the attendees were provided a seminar on the history and hunting of upland gamebirds in southern Alberta. Brian Ness held a Gear and Clothing

Seminar at lunch hour and a cleaning seminar which culminated in everyone cleaning their birds was held at the end of the day. Lastly the group talked recipes in a round table session that was our cooking seminar.

Thanks to Mike and Rodney Perkins and Brian Ness for mentoring the hunts and thanks to Vince Aiello, Chris McLean and Steven Wier for handling the master pointers.

A special thanks to Tanner, Ashley and Lily who supported us with the use of Spruce Creek Upland Club. Their helpful personalities made it a most welcoming environment for all participants.

Thanks also to Alberta Chapter of The Wildlife Society for their support in our mentor programs.







Vince Aiello holding onto Pepper while Abraham & Guryjinder proudly display their first pheasants.



Happy Mentors with their first pheasants.



Cleaning seminar.

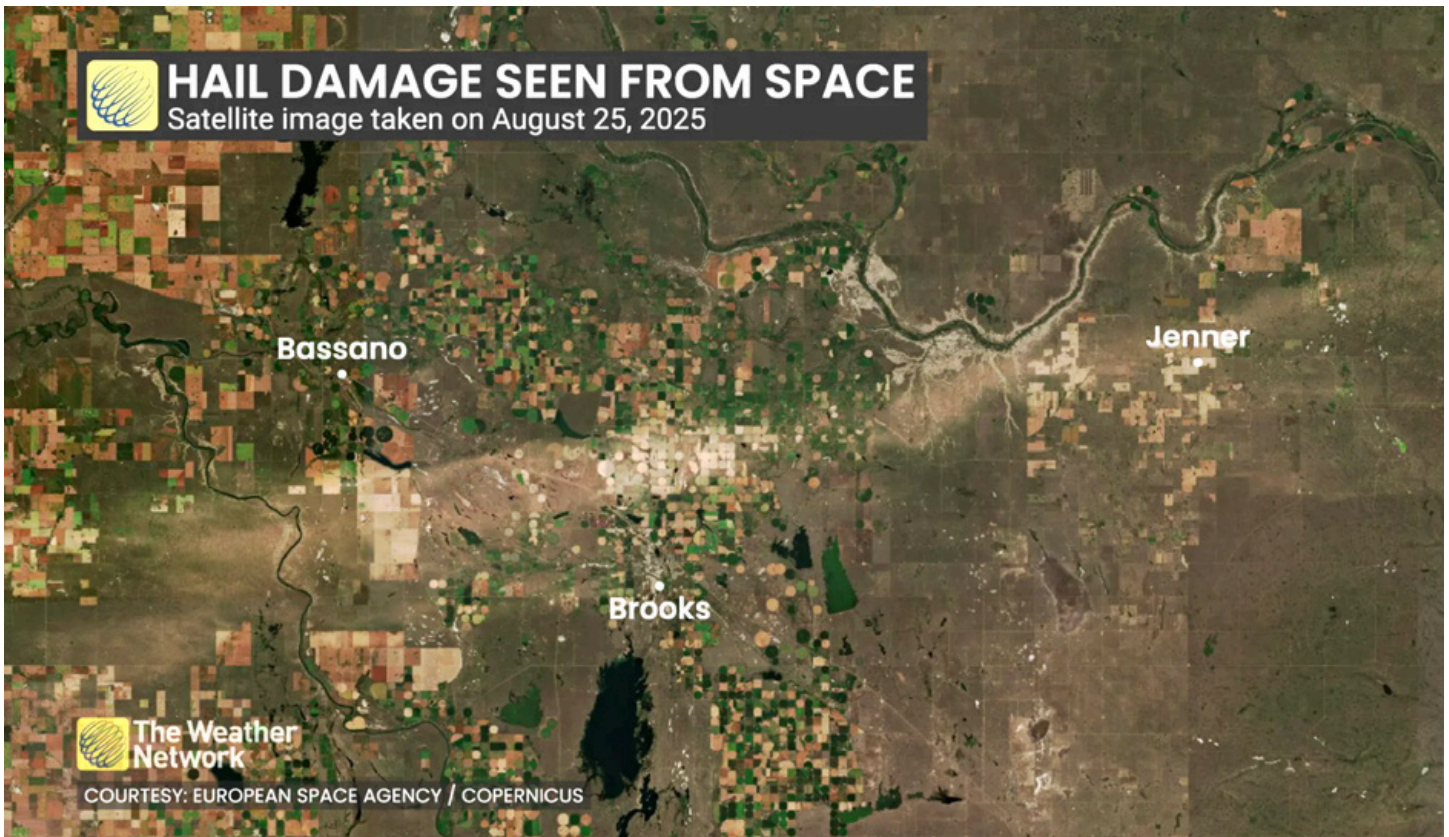


Brian Ness leads a seminar on Gear & Clothing for Your Successful Hunt.



# HAILSTORM DAMAGE

## UPLAND BIRD HABITAT TAKES A DIRECT HIT



On the evening of August 20, 2025, a severe thunderstorm swept across southern Alberta, producing intense hail, high winds, and widespread damage. The storm was part of a larger cluster of supercells that progressed across the Prairies and carved a visible “scar” that could be seen from space over 400 kilometres long.

Near Brooks and the surrounding areas, the storm produced golfball-sized hailstones and wind gusts exceeding 100 km/h. Along its path, windows were shattered, siding was ripped from structures, power lines were downed, trees stripped of foliage, and crops suffered near-total losses.

This strip of habitat will heal in time, but extreme weather like this hailstorm complicates the already challenging job of finding good, accessible areas to hunt pheasants and other upland gamebirds. Another reason why our efforts [Save the Edges](#) and work to create a [Public Access to Habitat \(PATH\) program](#) are essential to bird hunters in Alberta.



The pale streak in the satellite image (top) is a “scar” left behind by the August hailstorm.



# 'IMPROVEMENTS' CONTINUE

## IRRIGATION EXPANSION IN SOUTHERN ALBERTA

In our Winter 2023 Newsletter we brought you an article on the **irrigation improvements** issue in Alberta. This was shortly after finding out that the Alberta Irrigation Modernization Program (AIM) was launched. The following is an update on the progress of this program.

The program is the largest irrigation initiative in provincial history. Funded by an \$815 million partnership (Canada Infrastructure Bank, provincial government, irrigation districts), it aims to convert open canals to pipelines, build new reservoirs, and add up to 230,000 irrigated acres - all while maintaining or reducing water use.

**Unfortunately this initiative is having a major impact on edge habitat.** Canals are beacons for wildlife, and essential in areas where habitat is scarce. All sorts of plants, insects and wildlife rely on the water running through these areas. The 'improvements' slated for 278 kilometres of canals amount to lining the open canals with concrete or replacing them with pipelines, eliminating pheasant, other wildlife, and pollinator habitat.

Water loss in these irrigations systems is primarily the result of evaporation and seepage. And with a limited supply of available water, one of the ways to expand irrigation is to improve the current system's efficiency. Given a burgeoning world population to feed, it's difficult to argue against improving water efficiency, especially when your argument is focused on maintaining habitat for ring-necked pheasants.

Since 2022, successive budgets have allocated ~\$19 million annually toward installation and rehabilitation of pipelines, canal armouring, culvert upgrades, and spillway repairs. Some of these are crucial improvements such as the Bow River BD-2 pipelines

and Chin Chute upgrades for St. Mary River Irrigation District.

As of February of this year, province-wide modernization efforts span 11 irrigation districts, upgrading canals to pipelines, inserting water controls, and investigating off-stream storage impacting over 8,000 km of delivery infrastructure.

Pipeline conversion cuts seepage and evaporation, enabling more irrigated acreage from the same water budget. In addition irrigated agricultural production now contributes roughly \$5 billion annually to Alberta's GDP, supports 46,000 full-time equivalent jobs, and yields 8 times more revenue per hectare than dryland farming. This infrastructure has also attracted food processing investment including McCain Foods' \$600 million expansion near Coaldale which was catalyzed by assurance from the Chin Reservoir enhancement.

By 2028 the plan is to have pipeline/canal upgrades completed across multiple districts and completion of new off-stream reservoirs (Eyremore Dam near Brooks and the Chin expansion).

Southern Alberta's irrigation expansion over the last three years has been transformative—modernizing delivery systems, enabling economic growth, and securing water resilience amid intensifying drought. Yet, concerns from environmental advocates underscore the need for ecological oversight, ecosystem-friendly water allocations, and inclusive stakeholder input.

**Pheasants Forever is always working to have a seat at the table when it comes to conserving habitat for upland game birds and other wildlife.**

**By working together we hope to minimize the loss of native grassland and critical edge habitats in Southern Alberta.**

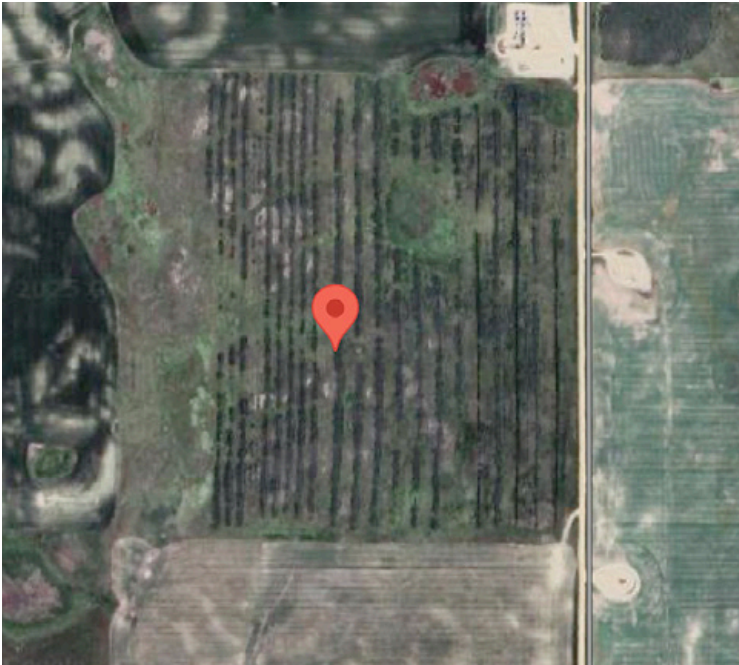


# BUFFALO BERRY PROJECT

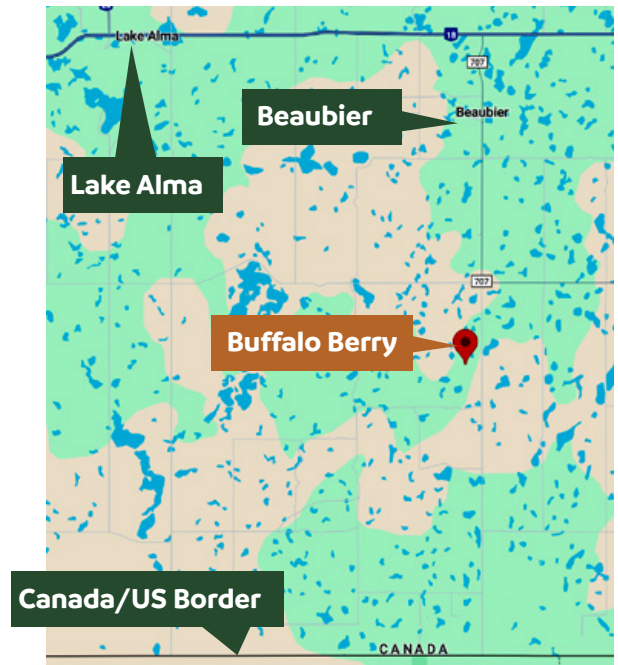
## SASKATCHEWAN

If you are hunting Saskatchewan this fall, check out the Pheasants Forever Canada property south of the Village of Beaubier, Saskatchewan and approximately 5 miles north of the US border. The land is situated in knob and kettle topography with a considerable amount of native prairie in the area due to the steep slopes of the “potholes”.

Maybe the most unique feature of the property is it has been planted with some 20 rows of Buffalo Berry shrubs. *Recent reports are that it's a popular spot for ring-necked pheasants.*



PF Canada Quarter Section at NE 28-1-16-W2. The rows of Buffalo Berry shrubs are evident in the image above.



The Buffalo Berry project is south of Beaubier and just north of the Canada/U.S. border on Secondary 707.

## PF CANADA ATTENDS AWCP

Pheasants Forever Canada attended the summer board meeting for the **American Wildlife Conservation Partners (AWCP)** this past summer. In attendance was Ariel Wiegard, Vice President of Government Affairs for Pheasants Forever Inc. and Quail Forever. Also in attendance were member groups looking to form a similar body here in Canada.



AWCP Summer Board Meeting



Ariel Wiegard and PF Canada President Perry McCormick.

[The AWCP](#) was founded in 2000 by leading conservationists who recognized the need to bring together organizations with a focus on wildlife conservation, ethical hunting, and responsible wildlife management.



# Youth/Novice Fall Shoot and Provincial Hunting Day



Over 150 students were in attendance.

**The 24th Annual Youth/Novice Fall Shoot on Provincial Hunting Day was another huge success.**

The event, which is held at AHEIA's Calgary Firearms Centre at DeWinton, featured over 150 students at the all-day event for some fun with guns. More than 20 dedicated mentor/leaders helped make the day safe and successful, including Pheasants Forever volunteers and directors.

First timers are taught safety first and then are coached for skill on the trap, skeet and sporting clay fields. Instruction is given on various hunting techniques, archery and other outdoor pursuits. All of the shells and firearms are free of charge and attendees were provided a complimentary lunch.

It is a special day for the attendees and the volunteer-leaders are rewarded with the smiles of all the young folks that just shot their first targets - a day in their life they will likely never forget.

Pheasants Forever Calgary and Alberta Conservation Association are proud sponsors of the annual gathering. Special thanks to Bob Gruszecki for his leadership in making the whole event safe and fun for all attendees. Special thanks to AHEIA for the photos we are sharing today!

***Pheasants Forever is a proud sponsor of the annual event.***









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**Gold Patron**

By sponsoring Pheasants Forever Calgary, you will be supporting critical upland habitat conservation for game birds in Alberta. Sponsorship recognition begins at our **Annual Dinner & Auction** held in May of each year and continues throughout the year at all of our events. Dollars raised through sponsorship allows Pheasants Forever Calgary to conserve and restore habitats vital to game birds, engage, educate and build relationships with stakeholders and support youth education programs. [Find out more...](#)



# FALL FORAGING SIGNIFICANT FOR THE PHEASANT LIFECYCLE

## Fall is particularly significant for pheasant survival.

During this transitional time, young pheasants are maturing, food sources are shifting, and habitat demands intensify. Understanding their ecological needs during this window provides valuable insight for both conservation and management efforts.

In late summer, southern Alberta's pheasants rely heavily on a mosaic of habitats that provide cover, food, and shelter from predators. Roadside ditches, riparian corridors, shelterbelts, and unmanaged grassy fields serve as critical refuge. Agricultural landscapes dominate the region, and pheasants are especially tied to grain fields, stubble, and haylands that provide both food and concealment.

When cover is scarce, pheasants will tend to concentrate in undisturbed areas such as cattail sloughs, brushy draws, and perennial cover areas. The patchwork nature of southern Alberta's farmland makes the availability of these secure habitats a key factor in late-season survival.

**The dietary needs of ring-necked pheasants shift into fall, giving this period of a pheasants lifecycle its 'foraging' moniker.** Young pheasants, hatched in early to mid-summer, rely on protein-rich insects during their first weeks of life. By late summer, they transition toward a more adult diet, composed of seeds and grains. Cereal grains such as wheat, barley, and oats become staple foods. Seeds from weeds and native forbs also contribute to their nutrition.

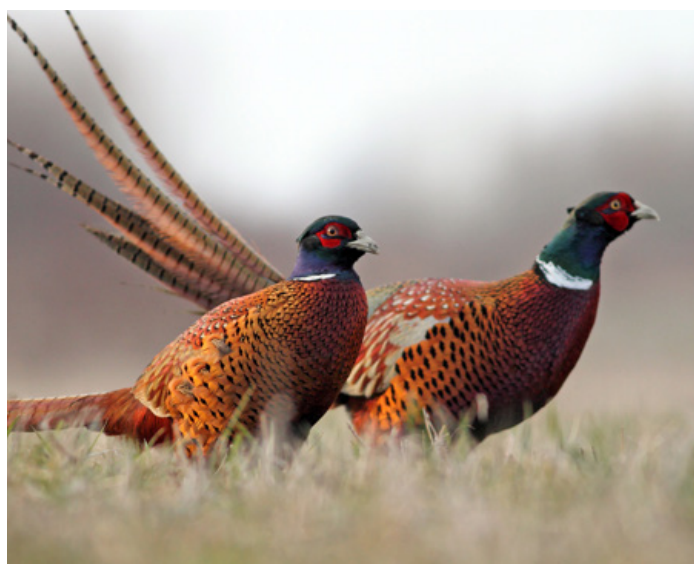
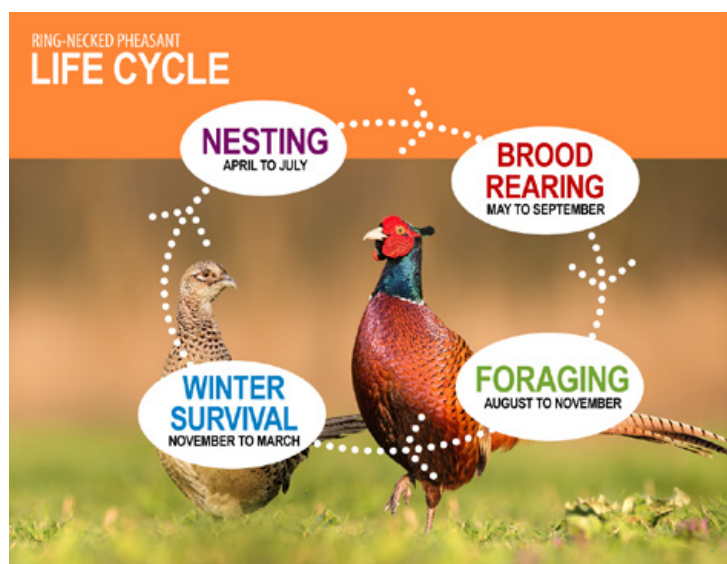
As harvest progresses, grain left behind by combines becomes a crucial resource. The stubble fields and spilled kernels scattered across farmland provide easily accessible calories that help birds build fat reserves for the harsher months ahead. Insects remain a minor but still valuable dietary component during warm spells. Access to a diverse food base during this period is essential for ensuring both juvenile survival and adult conditioning before winter.

Despite autumn's abundance of food, pheasants face significant survival challenges. First and foremost is habitat loss during harvest. As crops are removed, pheasants lose concealment, forcing birds to travel greater distances across exposed ground, heightening their vulnerability to predators such as coyotes, hawks, and owls.

Sudden early frosts or storms can reduce insect availability and damage vegetative cover. Birds must find reliable roosting areas that offer thermal protection. Without these safe havens, pheasants risk higher mortality as temperatures decline.

Habitat diversity, abundant food resources, and secure cover determines whether young birds are adequately prepared for winter.

**Conservation efforts by Pheasants Forever play a major role in providing habitat for this vital period of the life cycle.** [Read more on the life cycle of ring-necked pheasants.](#)





# THE FLUSH OF PHEASANTS

## HOW IT STARTED IN ALBERTA



**We don't know who it was specifically that first brought pheasants into Alberta.** But like a lot of conservation efforts we know it was spearheaded by a group of sportsmen. They introduced them into Alberta in 1908 near Strathmore. The population built up slowly, augmented by additional releases of adults and chicks. By the 1930s they had become well-established, especially in the Brooks area.

The colorful, hardy game birds quickly became a popular target among hunters due to their challenging flush, fast flight, and delicious meat.

The demand was such that organized pheasant releases started in the 1920s and 1930s. The provincial government and conservation organizations worked together to develop breeding programs and public hunting grounds. Over time, pheasant hunting became not only a fall tradition but also a tool for promoting outdoor recreation and wildlife conservation across southern Alberta.

The southern prairies and coulees of Alberta, particularly

around the Bow River, the Milk River Ridge, and areas near Lethbridge and Medicine Hat, became well-known hotspots for pheasant hunting. However, as native grassland habitat declined due to agricultural intensification and urban expansion, wild pheasant populations diminished.

Today, ringneck pheasant hunting in Alberta is as much about heritage as it is about harvest. For many Albertans, it's a multi-generational tradition—one that ties together family, prairie landscapes, bird dogs, and crisp October mornings. While wild populations are limited, managed hunting and habitat efforts continue to support the enduring legacy of pheasant hunting in the province.

*The ACA (see below) took over the pheasant release program in 2014 and now has more than 40 release locations providing Albertans with increased opportunities to experience the flush of these amazing gamebirds.*



## Pheasant Hunting Opportunities

Search for habitat that is preferred by wild birds and seek landowner permissions to open up additional opportunities. Find pheasant hunting opportunities on *Provincial Pheasant Release Sites* ranging from Peace River to Medicine Hat.

Visit [pheasant-release-sites at ACA](https://www.albertaconservation.ca/pheasant-release-sites) to plan your hunts at over 40 sites.



## READY FOR FALL STUFF



### DILL PICKLE TURKEY CUTLET

by Danielle Prewett



GET THE RECIPE

*"This recipe might as well be called "the hangover cure" because that's exactly what it does. It's a shatteringly crispy turkey cutlet that's been marinated in dill pickle juice and served with buttermilk ranch. It definitely made me feel better after a night with one too many glasses of wine."*

- Danielle Prewett

# 2025 PHOTO CONTEST NOW OPEN



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## Gold Sponsors

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### Gold - \$5,000

(\$5,000 to \$9,999)

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### Silver - \$2,500

(\$2,500 to \$4,999)

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### Bronze - \$1,000

(\$1,000 to \$2,499)

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## Friends

Conservation Partners





# IMPORTANT DATES

December 3	<b>Board of Director's Meeting and Holiday Appreciation Night</b> The Ranchmen's Club
February 20-22	<b><u>National Pheasant Fest &amp; Quail Classic 2026</u></b> Minneapolis Convention Center, Minneapolis, MN



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