



Agricultural Crown Lands

LEASES AND PERMITS REGULATION

Proposed Regulations
August 2026



A message from the Minister

Dear Manitobans,

I am honoured to present proposed changes to enhance the Agricultural Crown Lands Program through amendments to the Agricultural Crown Lands Leases and Permits Regulation, a regulation under The Crown Lands Act.

Our government is listening to producers and Indigenous rights holders and taking action to make agricultural Crown lands more affordable, fair and predictable for Manitoba's producers, while giving new and emerging producers a stronger chance to build a future in agriculture.

In fall 2025, Manitoba Agriculture launched an extensive ACL Program Review engagement with producers, Indigenous governments and organizations, industry partners and the public. Their feedback helped shape these proposed amendments, which focus on lease allocation, total leaseholder holdings and modern lease renewals.

Based on what we heard, the proposed amendments would strengthen the Agricultural Crown Lands Program by:

Improving the Lease Allocation Process

Moving from an auction-based approach to an application-based allocation process that gives new and emerging producers a better opportunity to access land.

Limiting Leaseholder Holdings

Reintroducing an Animal Unit Month limit so agricultural Crown lands remain available to more producers and are not concentrated in the hands of a few large leaseholders.

Providing an Ability to Renew Modern Leases

Providing consecutive 15-year renewals, subject to Treaty Land Entitlement and Duty to Consult requirements, so producers have greater certainty for long-term planning.

I have heard clearly that frequent changes to the ACL Program have created uncertainty for producers and their families. These proposed amendments are about bringing affordability and stability to the program while respecting our legal obligations and supporting the long-term future of Manitoba's livestock sector. I encourage you to review the proposed changes and share your feedback as we continue working together to strengthen the Agricultural Crown Lands Program.

Sincerely,

HONOURABLE RON KOSTYSHYN

Minister, Manitoba Agriculture

The Agricultural Crown Lands Program

Manitoba's Agricultural Crown Lands Program administers Crown lands designated for agricultural use. Provincial Crown lands are held by the Manitoba government, which uses land-use planning to determine how Crown land parcels may be used.

The program supports the use of provincial land for agriculture through cropping leases, forage leases and hay and grazing permits. Forage leases, held primarily by cattle producers, account for most program activity. Manitoba has approximately 2.2 million acres of potential agricultural Crown lands, with approximately 1.5 million acres currently under active cropping or forage lease or permit.

Agricultural Crown lands provide grazing requirements for approximately 90,000 beef cattle in Manitoba. Most program clients are cattle producers and the program promotes sustainable land use through long-term leasing agreements.

The program also supports productive, bio-diverse landscapes by promoting responsible land use that benefits producers and Manitoba. It uses available Crown lands to support livestock production, rural development and socio-economic benefits, while recognizing and respecting Indigenous use for traditional purposes and the exercise of Indigenous rights.

Recent Regulatory Changes

Manitoba made regulatory changes to the Agricultural Crown Lands Program in 2019 to introduce auctions for allocating leases and permits and update several parts of the leasing framework. These changes included:

- **Lease allocation:** shifting from tenders to public auctions.
- **Lease terms:** introducing 15-year leases.
- **Forage capacity:** using Animal Unit Months (AUMs) as a measure of productivity and to determine rent, established at the start of the lease.

- **Transferability:** allowing in-family transfers to continue for pre-2019 leases.
- **Eligibility:** making First Nations eligible to hold leases.

Additional changes took effect in January 2024 to improve flexibility and fairness in the program. These changes included:

- **Forage capacity:** setting forage capacity at lease issuance and fixing it for the term of the lease.
- **Lease extensions:** allowing modern 15-year leases to qualify for a five-year extension if a forage management plan is implemented during the final five years of the lease.
- **Transfers:** allowing 15-year leases and renewable permits to be transferred to any eligible lessee for the remainder of the term.
- **Legacy nominations:** allowing outgoing leaseholders to nominate successors, subject to Treaty Land Entitlement and consultation assessments.
- **Eligibility:** making non-profit Indigenous organizations eligible to hold an ACL lease.

Building on feedback from program participants and lessons learned through implementation, Manitoba began a comprehensive program review in 2025-26. The review is assessing what is working well, identifying gaps and exploring changes to strengthen fairness, predictability and long-term land stewardship.

Building on feedback from program participants and lessons learned through implementation, Manitoba began a comprehensive program review in 2025-26. The review is assessing what is working well, identifying gaps and exploring changes to strengthen fairness, predictability and long-term land stewardship. The review included focused engagements with producers, associations, Indigenous communities and organizations and the public.

Lease Allocation System

A points-based allocation process would be guided by the following principles:

Transparency

Applicants would be assessed using clear criteria and a published scoring process, so they understand how allocation decisions are made.

Equitable Access

The process would support fair access to forage leases by recognizing new and emerging producers and applicants with smaller existing holdings.

Stewardship and Sustainability

The process would encourage responsible land management and support applicants who demonstrate environmental stewardship.

Predictability and Consistency

Applications would be assessed using the same rules and evidence requirements to support consistent, objective and understandable decisions.

Current State	What We Heard	Proposed Enhancement
Agricultural Crown lands leases are currently allocated through an auction process. Feedback received through the program review indicates the auction process can favour larger, more financially established producers and make it harder for new and emerging producers to access leases.	EngageMB respondents generally preferred generally preferred a points-based allocation system over a modified auction or tender process. Participants said auctions can be perceived to favour applicants with greater financial capacity and may create barriers for new and emerging producers. EngageMB respondents and Indigenous Nations expressed support for improving access to the program for new and emerging producers. Feedback emphasized the importance of transparent criteria, clear definitions, fair access, local and operational need, proximity to available parcels and demonstrated stewardship.	Manitoba proposes to move to an application-based allocation process for forage leases and permits. Cropping leases and cropping permits would continue to be allocated by auction. Applications would be assessed using a points system set out in policy. The system would support fair access and help new and emerging producers participate in the program. Criteria could include factors such as new producer status, existing holdings, proximity to the parcel, intended agricultural use, livestock need and demonstrated land stewardship or forage management experience. Applicants would provide required information to support eligibility and assessment, including information on leases or permits held directly or indirectly.

Restriction of Leaseholders Total ACL

There is currently no limit on the amount of agricultural Crown lands that can be held by one leaseholder. Before 2019, leaseholders were limited to 4,800 Animal Unit Months (AUMs). While that limit is considered too low for many modern farm operations, these lands are a public resource. The proposed changes would establish a higher maximum holdings limit to support fair access to agricultural Crown lands.

Current State	What We Heard	Proposed Enhancement
No restrictions	Participants discussed fairness and access in relation to potential limits on total ACL holdings. Themes included maintaining opportunities for diverse operation sizes, ensuring access for new entrants and avoiding unintended consequences that reduce land stewardship or program stability. A majority supporting establishing restrictions of leaseholders total ACL.	Set a maximum holdings limit of 10,000 Animal Unit Months (AUMs). This limit would include ACL held directly by a leaseholder, as well as ACL held through another business, partnership or related entity. Leaseholders over the 10,000 AUM limit would generally not be able to receive more ACL through a new allocation, transfer or nomination. In limited cases, the Director could allow an exception where it supports the purpose of the program, such as when no eligible applicant is available for a parcel.

Animal Unit Month

The amount of forage required by one **animal unit** (AU) for one month is called an **Animal Unit Month** (AUM).

One animal unit is defined as a 1,000 lb. (450 kg) beef cow with or without a nursing calf with a daily intake requirement of 26 lb. (11.8 kg) of dry matter forage. Therefore, one AUM is equal to 780 lbs (355 kg) of dry matter forage intake (30 days X daily forage requirement).

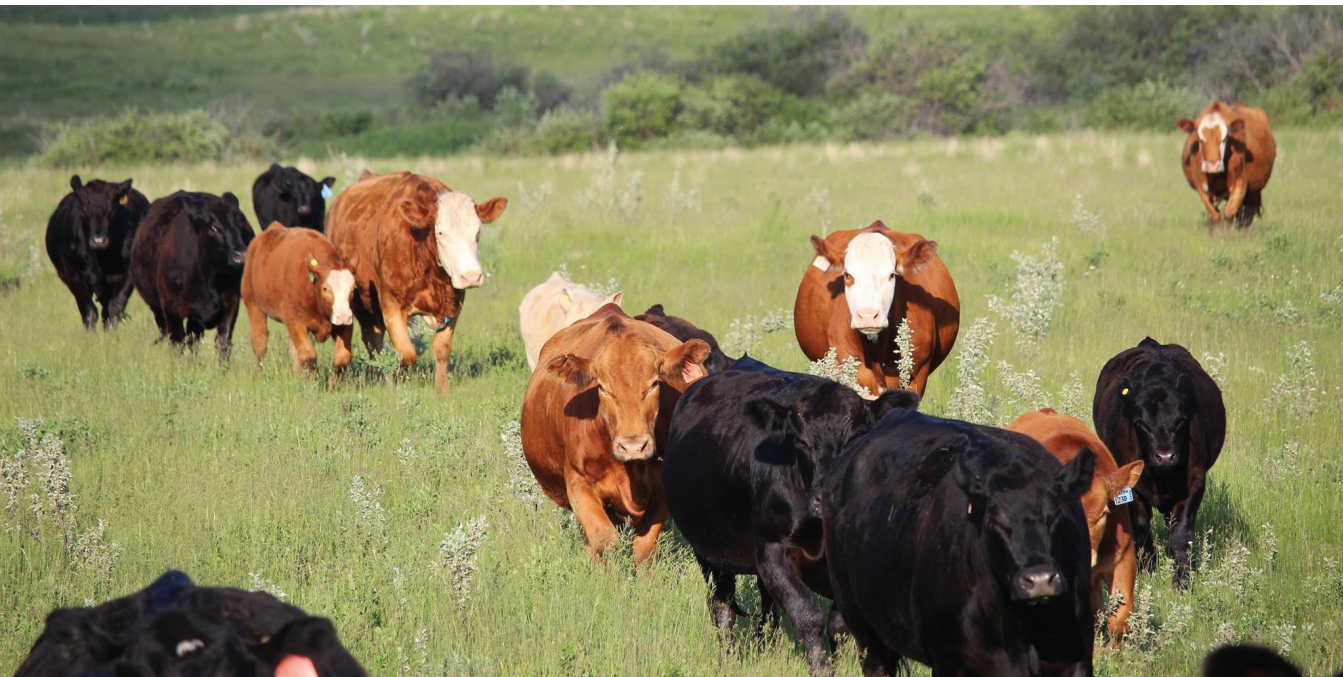
Example: a parcel capable of producing enough forage for 40 AUMs could sustain 10, 1,000 lb beef cows for 4 months (10 cows x 4 months = 40 AUMs). Generally, cows are larger than this and one cow may account for greater than one AUM, possibly in the 1.3 AUMs per cow range. In this case, the same parcel may only support seven or eight cows for the same period.

More information on stocking rates and AUMs is available at gov.mb.ca/agriculture/livestock/sheep/how-to-determine-stocking-rates-for-manitoba-pastures.html.

Renewal of a Modern Lease

A proposal to provide indefinite 15-year renewals, subject to Treaty Land Entitlement and Duty to Consult is being considered.

Current State	What We Heard	Proposed Enhancement
The Regulation allows a five-year extension on a 15-year lease term for qualifying leases issued after October 2019. Leaseholders that complete and implement a forage management plan for at least the last five years of the 15-year lease term, are eligible for a five-year extension, thus making the lease term up to 20 years. Only one extension period is available. At the end of the lease term, the land will be put to auction and reallocated. The outgoing leaseholder is eligible to bid on the lease and, if successful, would be allocated a new 15-year lease with a possible five-year extension.	Respondents strongly supported renewal rights and emphasized the importance of a lease term that enables long term investments in land health and infrastructure. An overwhelming majority (83.3 per cent) supported establishing a leaseholders' ability to renew their ACL leases to provide long-term stability for leaseholders and enable stewardship and operational planning.	Allow modern forage leases to be renewed for additional 15-year terms, providing producers with more long-term certainty while allowing Manitoba to continue meeting Treaty Land Entitlement and Duty to Consult requirements. Renewals would be available when the land remains suitable and available for agricultural use, the leaseholder remains in good standing and a renewal application is submitted by the required deadline. A leaseholder who received the lease through a transfer could also be eligible for renewal.



Expanding Eligibility

In 2019, Manitoba expanded eligibility so First Nations bands could hold agricultural Crown lands leases and renewable permits. Since then, First Nations have also received more frequent notices about lands available for Treaty Land Entitlement selection, as leases are now reviewed before being reallocated through the auction process. Manitoba is proposing to further expand eligibility by including Indigenous governments and organizations as eligible lease or permit holders.

Current State	What We Heard	Proposed Enhancement
The following entities are eligible to hold an agricultural lease or permit: • a Canadian citizen or permanent resident • a Partnership made up of Canadian citizens or permanent residents • a First Nations band • a non-profit organization, as defined in the Income Tax Act (Canada), that principally represents the interests of one or more bands, individuals of Métis descent or holders of aboriginal or treaty rights; • a forage cooperative made up of Canadian citizens or permanent residents • a Hutterite colony or a corporation owned by a Hutterite colony or similar organization • a corporation made up of Canadian citizens or permanent residents	This proposed change reflects feedback received through a dedicated Indigenous engagement.	Update the eligibility language by replacing references to “band” and “non-profit organization” with “Indigenous government or organization.” This would clarify that eligible Indigenous governments, including First Nations bands, the Manitoba Métis Federation and Inuit governments, as well as eligible Indigenous organizations that represent First Nations, Métis, Inuit or other Indigenous rights holders, may hold an agricultural lease or permit.

Engagement and Consultation

Manitobans are invited to provide feedback on the proposed amendments to the Agricultural Crown Lands Leases and Permits Regulation under The Crown Lands Act. Comments may be submitted through the Manitoba Regulatory Consultation Portal at reg.gov.mb.ca/home.