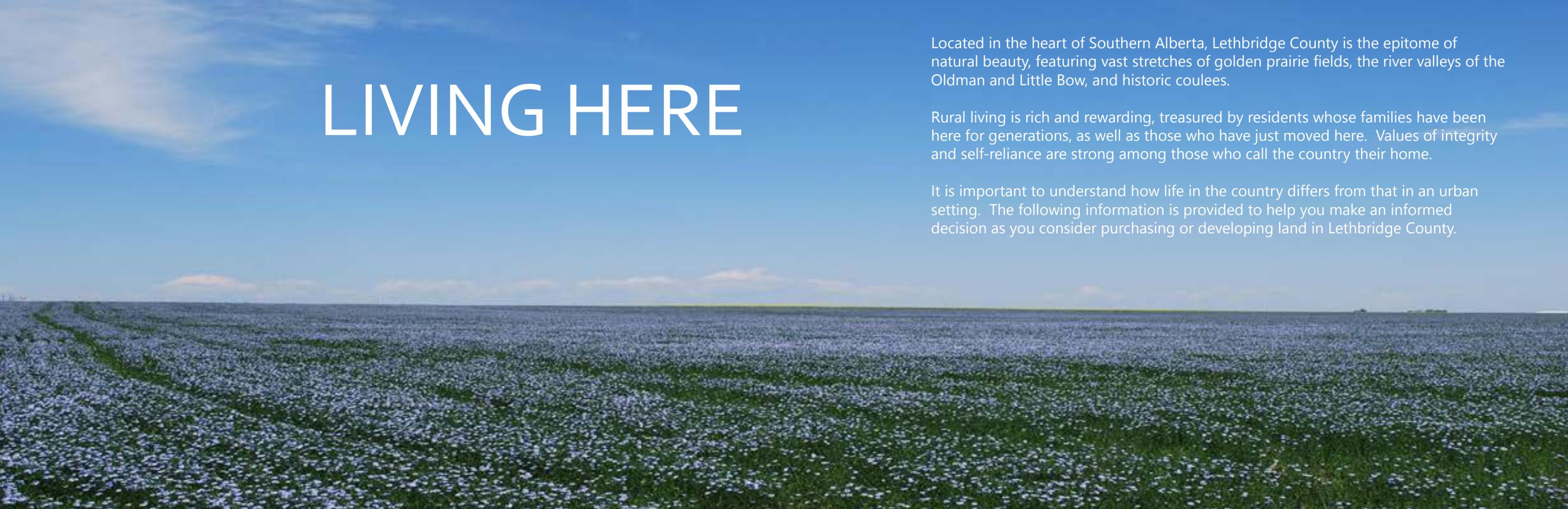
A rural landscape featuring a vibrant yellow field in the foreground, a large brown barn in the middle ground, and a blue sky with scattered white clouds. The scene is captured from a low angle, with tall grasses in the immediate foreground.

A Guide to

RURAL LIVING

in Lethbridge County

A wide-angle photograph of a vast field of blue flowers, likely lupines, stretching to the horizon under a clear blue sky with a few wispy clouds. The field is densely packed with small blue blossoms, and a faint path or track is visible on the left side. The overall scene is bright and open, representing the natural beauty of the region.

LIVING HERE

Located in the heart of Southern Alberta, Lethbridge County is the epitome of natural beauty, featuring vast stretches of golden prairie fields, the river valleys of the Oldman and Little Bow, and historic coulees.

Rural living is rich and rewarding, treasured by residents whose families have been here for generations, as well as those who have just moved here. Values of integrity and self-reliance are strong among those who call the country their home.

It is important to understand how life in the country differs from that in an urban setting. The following information is provided to help you make an informed decision as you consider purchasing or developing land in Lethbridge County.

Owning rural land comes with the responsibility of knowing how to care for it. Continual stewardship and land management are essential elements of rural life. There are many different issues that can affect your property and it is important to do your research before purchasing or developing land.

- Lethbridge County's Land Use Bylaw divides the County into land use districts (zones). It is important to know what uses are permitted or restricted in your area and on your property. If you plan to do any development on your property, you will likely need a permit prior to work beginning. If you are unsure if you require a permit, call Planning and Development at (403) 328-5525 or email planning@lethcounty.ca.
- Do not assume all site plans for your property are accurate unless the land has been recently surveyed and posted by a licensed professional surveyor. Fences and outbuildings are sometimes located on property lines so it is important to have a survey done to be sure of the locations.
- Irrigation ditches can raise groundwater levels and flowing water can be a hazard. Before purchasing your property, consider the possible dangers and the effects of seasonal groundwater fluctuation that may affect your basement or water supply. Contact the local irrigation district for more information. Also be aware that natural waterways and drainage cannot be altered without approval. Contact Alberta Environment & Parks for information and approval.

- Developing near a coulee or river may also cause unforeseen issues. Please contact the Planning and Development Department for further information on developing near coulees and the river.

Note that the view from your property may change as neighbours may have plans for development. Development notices are issued in the weekly Sunny South News and on the Lethbridge County website at: <http://lethcounty.ca/departments/planning-and-development>



- Certain weeds and plants are considered invasive, or are harmful (even poisonous) to other plant life and animals. You are responsible for controlling noxious weeds on your property. The County's Weed Inspector can assist you in identifying noxious weeds and determining the best plan for eliminating them.
- Lethbridge County encourages landowners to landscape their properties to add value and visual appeal to the land. Be sure to locate all trees, hedges, dugouts, etc. the proper distance from roads and property lines to avoid having to move them in the future. Check with Planning and Development for the setbacks on your property prior to landscaping.

AGRICULTURE

Agriculture is the economic driver of Lethbridge County, contributing billions of dollars each year to the economy, as well as thousands of jobs. The County has the largest concentration of animals in any municipality in Alberta.

- If you decide to live among the farms and ranches in Lethbridge County, it is important to know that this comes with noise, traffic, dust, smoke, and odour that may disturb your peace and quiet.
 - Farmers often work around the clock, especially during seeding and harvest times, creating noise and adding slow-moving vehicles and equipment on roads.
 - Land preparations and other operations can cause dust, especially during dry or windy weather.
 - Burning of some materials is permitted in the County. This creates smoke that you may find objectionable.
 - Confined feeding operations can contain thousands of livestock that create noise and strong odours.
- You cannot expect Lethbridge County to intervene on the day-to-day operations of your agri-business neighbours. Alberta's Agricultural Operations Protection Act governs livestock operations and limits ability to raise nuisance and liability claims. If you decide to build near a confined feeding operation, you will be required to get a waiver from the feedlot operation.
- Fertilizers and herbicides are often used in growing crops. Controlling invasive weeds is a priority for farmers, who may apply herbicides either on the ground or from the air. You may find you are sensitive to these types of chemicals.
- There are numerous irrigation canals in Lethbridge County. Minimum development setbacks exist near these canals. Contact Planning and Development at (403) 328-5525 or email planning@lethcounty.ca to determine the setbacks on your property.



- Be mindful of livestock and wildlife. All animals, whether on a farm or not, can be dangerous. Do not feed wildlife and do not approach farm animals unless you have permission to do so from the property owner.
- Moving to a rural area is not a license to let pets roam. Your family pet can become a nuisance to neighbours or prey to wild animals. The County's Dog Regulations and Control, and Animal Control Bylaws provide more information on animal regulations in the County. If you own livestock, it is your responsibility to fence them in, not your neighbour's responsibility to fence them out.
- Often those who move to the County wish to start a "hobby farm", or own animals not permitted in an urban setting. Consult the County's Animal Control Bylaw to determine the type and number of animals permitted on your property.

MOTHER NATURE

Mother Nature is unpredictable and affects rural landowners much differently than those who live in the city.

- Expect seasonal fluctuations to be harsher than those you may experience in an urban area. The weather can be unpredictable, with temperature, snow, wind, rain, fog, etc. changing with a moment's notice.
- The topography of your land will dictate where water will flow during heavy precipitation. A flash flood may occur (especially in the spring), and steep slopes can slide in wet weather. Pay close attention to these areas to determine how water will flow and plan to develop your land accordingly.
- When developing your property, it is advised you plant a shelterbelt of trees to protect your house from the wind. Consult the County's Land Use Bylaw prior to planting to determine setbacks from road right-of-ways.
- You will be required to obtain a geotechnical study prior to locating structures near the top or bottom of a bank or slope (ie. coulees).
- During a storm, you may experience a loss of power, and it may take some time for repairs. It is recommended that you have a generator to provide power to your home if this should occur.
- In some situations, you may not be able to leave or enter your property due to snowstorms, fires, or floods. It is important to be aware of the potential risks your property has and to be prepared for these situations. It is also recommended that you acquire any supplies or equipment that will assist you in a storm or natural disaster. Prepare a 72 Hour Kit and Household Emergency Plan to ensure you and your family are well-prepared.



ROADS & ACCESS

Lethbridge County maintains approximately 200 bridges, 300 km of asphalt, and 2,000 km of gravel roads.

- There are some public roads that are minimally maintained- check with Municipal Services at (403) 328-5525 to determine the status of a specific road.
- Unpaved roads are not always smooth and can washboard. They generate dust (especially in dry years), and are slippery when wet. Drive with caution in these conditions. You may notice an increase in vehicle maintenance costs when traveling regularly on rural roads.
- In extreme weather conditions some roads can become impassable and may not be cleared for several days if they are not priority roads (like haul routes and school bus routes). It may be wise to invest in winter tires or a four-wheel drive vehicle to travel safely.
- Many roads are considered heavy haul routes. Be aware that large transport vehicles regularly travel these roads.
- Road maintenance and repairs to the thousands of kilometres of roads takes a considerable amount of time. Repairs may be delayed as roads must dry out before work can commence.

- On your property, a proposed driveway approach may conflict with safety and traffic flow. Approval is required for access onto County roads and Alberta Infrastructure & Transportation approval is necessary prior to constructing access onto numbered highways. Check with Municipal Services at (403) 328-5525 to determine what permits, construction standards, and fees are required.
- Heavy rains can destroy roads. Lethbridge County will repair and maintain municipal roads, however private roads are the responsibility of the landowner who uses them.

UTILITY SERVICES

Water, natural gas, electricity, telephone, cable, sewer, and other services may not always be available or may not be equivalent to urban standards.

- Repairs to utility systems can often take much longer than in an urban setting.
- Electricity, natural gas, TV, and internet are supplied by private utility companies. Note that cell phone service coverage may be unreliable in some areas.
- Direct mail delivery is not available to most areas of the County. Contact Canada Post to find out how your mail will be delivered.

- Potable water is available in some hamlets and other parts of the County through a system of regional water lines and co-ops. Check with Municipal Services to determine if your land is serviceable. There are few areas of the County where water wells are feasible, therefore you may need to have potable water delivered to your home. If you intend on treating irrigation or surface water for human consumption, contact the Lethbridge Community Health Centre at (403) 388-6689 for testing.
- Sanitary sewer service is only available in some hamlets, otherwise you will need to use an approved septic system or other treatment process. Soil type, setbacks, and slopes are important elements in determining the cost and function of your system. Additionally, the size of the house on the property will determine the size of the septic system. Have your system designed and installed by a reliable sanitation firm. Maintenance of private septic systems are the responsibility of the landowner.
- Household refuse is picked up weekly in hamlets. All other citizens must take waste to one of four County transfer or recycling facilities. While some burning is permitted in the County, certain items are prohibited under bylaw. You must obtain a fire permit prior to conducting a burn and you must observe fire bans. Check the County's website (www.lethcounty.ca) for information on prohibited items and transfer/recycling station hours and locations.



There are transfer stations located at Coaldale, Iron Springs, Picture Butte, and Nobleford

EMERGENCY SERVICES

Emergency response services (police, fire, ambulance) are primarily volunteer-based. Response times for emergency services cannot be guaranteed in Lethbridge County.

- Under some conditions you may find that emergency service response times are slower due to circumstances beyond the control of the provider. Travel distances, road and weather conditions, emergency call volumes and the availability of emergency service personnel and equipment can all affect emergency response times.
- It is important you know your rural address (blue sign number) in case of an emergency. This will help 911 dispatchers ensure emergency responders can get to you.



612033
RGE RD 123

***Example of a Rural Address Sign
(also known as a Blue Sign)***

- You are responsible for preventing fires on your property. The physical characteristics of the property may be a detriment in an emergency, such as a wildfire. Be aware that trees, shrubs, and grass can provide fuel to a fire. Ensuring a defensible perimeter around your buildings is encouraged. Consider on-site reservoirs on your property as rural water supplies are often inadequate for fighting fires. If you are responsible for starting a fire you will be billed the costs of extinguishing that fire.

RECREATION & PUBLIC LAND

Lethbridge County is home to several parks, lakes, campgrounds, community halls, recreational areas, golf courses, and other attractions.

- Visit www.lethcounty.ca/visitors/recreation for more information on all the recreational opportunities that exist in Lethbridge County.
- There are many parcels of land in the County that belong to various levels of government (Federal, Provincial, or County). Some may be adjacent to water bodies and some on undeveloped road allowances. These lands may be leased to neighbouring farmers, so be sure to check before entering onto the land. If you witness misuse or vandalism on these lands, please contact the appropriate authorities.



The information presented here is intended as a guideline and introduction to some of the realities of rural living.

You may discover other issues that have not been covered. We encourage you to research and examine all aspects of country living so that you will enjoy Lethbridge County to the fullest, without any unexpected surprises.

Although many of the issues covered here may sound discouraging, we believe the benefits far outweigh the inconveniences. We offer these comments with the hope that they will help you to better understand everyday life in the County.

County elected officials, administration, and staff pride themselves on their accessibility and willingness to assist our citizens. For questions or more information on any of the topics presented, please contact us at (403) 328-5525.



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