

## FALL SCAVENGER HUNT

**Lesson Summary:** Students participate in an outdoor activity, observing the change in the season from Summer to Fall and drawing connections between this change and the work done by farmers.

**Guiding Question:** What does the changing season mean for agriculture? What happens to plants when the seasons change? What do farmers need to do when seasons change?

**Suggested Time:** 60 minutes

**Outcomes:**

- Students will know that the Fall changes they are noticing around them have implications for where our food comes from.

**After students have completed the scavenger hunt, bring them back to a large group and discuss the following questions:**

**Look at the items you observed. How are they signs of the season changing?**

- o Geese flying south for the winter
- o More ladybugs around because they gather in large numbers, looking for a safe and dry place to spend the winter.
- o Berries ripe on trees
- o Rabbits changing colour to be able to blend into snow \_\_\_\_\_

**Tell me about changes in the plants in our neighbourhood/schoolyard?**

**How can you tell if plants are getting ready for winter?**

- o **Perennials/Trees**
  - Leaves turn colour and fall off trees
  - Pine trees drop pinecones
  - Oak trees drop acorns
  - Growth stops
- o **Annuals**
  - Flowers dry up and seeds ripen (marigolds are a good example)
  - Plants dry up and turn brown



**Do all plants survive winter?**

Ask for examples of plants that don't survive (e.g. vegetables, many flowers etc.) Remind students that annuals only live one season/year and perennials live many seasons/years. Ask students to look at the items collected on their scavenger hunt and identify if they are from an annual or a perennial. Discussion could include that some plants can be perennial in some regions but annual in others, depending on the severity of winter conditions. For example, rosemary has a perennial growth habit in the pacific northwest where the weather is humid and mild, but is considered an annual on the prairies where it can't survive the cold, dry winter.

**We are going to talk about some of the plants/crops Saskatchewan farmers grow.  
Can you name some crops that they grow?**

Canola, flax, wheat, barley, oats, mustard, peas, lentils, chickpeas, alfalfa

**Are these crops annuals or perennials?** Explain that they are mainly annuals (except alfalfa and clover).

- Explain to students that the crops farmers grow also change as they come to the end of their lifecycle. The plants stop growing, ripen, form seeds etc. Farmers watch their crops closely to decide when is the right time to harvest the seeds. Some seeds are saved to grow more plants the following year, others are processed to become food products. For example, when wheat kernels are harvested, they are processed to become flour. We can use the flour to make bread, cookies, muffins and more.
- Fall is a very busy time for grain farmers as they need to harvest the grain before winter comes. Before combining, the plants need to be dry so they don't damage the combines. The seeds also need to be ripe and dry.

**Why do you think seeds need to be ripe and dry?**

- If the seed isn't dry it can spoil or mold. It would be sold for lower quality, which means less money.

**We are going to talk about some of the animal raised on Saskatchewan farms. Can you name some animals?**

Cattle, bison, hogs, chickens, sheep, turkeys, goats, llamas, alpacas



**How do farmers and ranchers care for their animals when the seasons change?**

- Many animals raised on farms, such as poultry and hogs, live in barns so that they are protected from predators and harsh weather. They typically live in or around the barn all year long.
- Animals that graze, such as cattle, live outside on pastures, large areas of land where they eat grasses and sometimes crops that have been planted for them.
- In the cold winter grass and crops don't grow. Snow covers the grass that was left after the growing season. In order to take care of the cattle, and make sure they have food to eat, ranchers round them up in the fall and move them closer to home.
- Because plants can't grow during the winter on the prairies, ranchers provide feed for their cattle. Sometimes they buy the feed from a supplier, similar to how we would buy dog food from a pet store. Sometimes they grow crops such as alfalfa during the summer that is baled or made into silage for the cattle to eat during the winter. Sometimes they plant certain crops that are left on the field to be grazed during the winter. This is called winter forage and works well with tall plants, like corn, that stay above the snow. Ranchers also make sure that the cattle have fresh water to drink during the winter. When the temperatures are cold, the water will freeze in the trough, so ranchers use electric elements to keep the water warm enough to stay liquid.
- No matter what kind of animal they raise, farmers and ranchers work hard all year long to take care of them. Even on the coldest days, farmers check on their animals to make sure they have enough food and water, they are safe from predators and they are healthy.

**Wrap up**

- Harvest is sometimes a race against Mother Nature! Farmers need sunny, warm, slightly windy days to harvest. A small rain in summer can dry up very fast but as it gets closer to winter, it takes longer to dry. This is because days are shorter, and the weather is cooler.
- Harvest happens in fall when the seeds ripen, and the plants become dry. Many plants and animals also show changes in the fall. These changes are important so that the plants and animals can prepare for winter.
- Farmers and Ranchers prepare for the changing seasons by planning for feed and moving their animals either into a barn or to a near-by pasture. They take care of their animals during the winter by providing food and fresh water. They check on them regularly to make sure they are healthy and safe from predators.



Head outside and see how many of the following FALL things you can spot!

