

Alberta Conservation Association
2020/21 Project Summary Report

Project Name: Harvest Your Own

Information, Education and Communications Program Manager: Don Myhre

Project Leader: Todd Zimmerling

Primary ACA staff on this project: Budd Erickson, Colin Eyo, and Don Myhre

Contractors on this project: Christine Graham and Ariana Tourneur

Partnerships: N/A

Key Findings

- Harvest Your Own provides both new and experienced hunters with timely and relevant content on hunting in Alberta so they can enjoy success in the field and in the kitchen.
- The target audience is younger (primary age 18 to 35) with a female skew. We are targeting Albertans who are new to or interested in getting into hunting. The secondary audience is existing hunters looking to expand and share their knowledge and experience with other Alberta hunters.
- Harvest Your Own is a multi-platform media property. This year's focus was to expand our digital audiences by enhancing the value of the website through adding more articles and recipes. We committed a great deal of time to our online engagement—increasing post frequency, quality, and engagement on both Facebook and Instagram (we removed Twitter as it is not region-based enough). Another important focus was the launching of the Harvest Your Own podcast, hosted by contributor Brad Fenson.

Abstract

Alberta is one of the few jurisdictions in North America seeing a growth in the number of hunters. This increase is often attributed to an interest in organic and local food, and hunting as a way to actively and ethically source your own protein. New hunters, in particular men, women, and youth from urban areas, may not have a network of family and friends to help them learn to hunt. Harvest Your Own aims to provide new hunters—or people interested in the idea of hunting—with timely and relevant content that will help them take actionable steps and work towards success in the field and kitchen.

In 2020/21, Harvest Your Own increased its social media audience to 3,231 (+246) Facebook followers and 1,013 (+317) Instagram followers. The Harvest Your Podcast, launched in July 2020, currently has 2,433 downloads.

Introduction

Alberta is one of the few jurisdictions in North American seeing a growth in the number of hunters, and our goal is to ensure the momentum continues—especially considering many regions of North America are seeing serious declines in hunting. Alberta is a place with people who have a keen interest in natural and local food, and hunting is a way to actively and ethically source your own protein. But it is a journey with multiple steps, and new hunters (in particular men, women, and youth from urban areas) may not have a network of family and friends to help them get started. Harvest Your Own aims to provide new hunters with what they need, to go from “zero to hunter.” Additionally, our relevant content can help any hunter—from novice all the way to experienced—find success in the field and the kitchen. It’s about learning whenever possible, and most of all, enjoying the process.

Methods

Harvest Your Own is managed and delivered by Alberta Conservation Association’s (ACA’s) Information, Education, and Communications Program. Project staff develop content for multiple platforms, and subject matter experts and writers are contracted to contribute content. Content is guided by a high-level content calendar that identifies seasonal subject area and general timing of content by month and week (e.g., article, recipe, video, contest, personal story).

The content calendar is used to create the web and social media schedule, which outlines weekly and daily posts for Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter.

Results

Harvest Your Own increased its web and social media presence and audience in 2020/21 to:

- 3,231 Facebook followers
- 1,013 Instagram followers
- 2,443 Podcast downloads

The increase in overall audience is gradual and we are pleased to see questions from new hunters via comments and emails, and also from experienced hunters sharing their expertise and personal photos and stories. Towards the end of 2021, the push for new, engaging content has become priority. We are looking to bring in more personality, conversation, and most of all, useful “snackable” content that is easily shareable and of value to our audiences. The primary approach is a balance of content that includes: new podcast episodes covering a wide range of topics, beginner recipes as well as ones that maximize your harvest, how-to articles and tips on social media, and engagement opportunities including the sharing of followers’ photos and recipes.

Conclusions

Proactive advertising, consistent messaging and most of all, exciting and engaging content are key to increasing Harvest Your Own brand recognition. This is how we continue to promote hunting as part of contemporary, healthy, and rewarding lifestyle, and supporting member groups and stakeholders in a province with growing and shifting demographics.

Communications

- <https://www.harvestyourown.ca/>
- Facebook: @HarvestYourOwn Facebook
- Instagram: @harvestyourownaca
- We reached new hunters with unique contests (including an in-person range experience with partner Korth Group, among others) on Facebook and Instagram.
- We reached new audiences with print and digital ads in culinary magazines.

- We posted much more frequently than the previous year (total of eight–15 times a week) with unique, non-repetitive posts, plus engaged new features of Instagram including “Stories.”
- We launched digital campaigns spanning both lifestyle and food-focused messages that upped our web traffic significantly (The “Learn to Hunt” pages reflected this), using boosted posts, social media paid ads, and Google responsive ads.
- We sent the Harvest Your Own e-newsletter to subscribers every four to six weeks.
- We reached out to outdoor retailers and manufacturers to support Harvest Your Own with contest donations and advertising opportunities.
- We launched a podcast with engaging personalities who were able to teach our audience something new related to hunting (covering nutrition, cooking, hunting tips, land access and so much more), or simply share their unique perspectives. Feedback has been extremely positive.



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