



NEWS RELEASE

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Livestock Groups Come Together to Investigate Biosecurity Gaps

If the age old adage of two heads are better than one holds true, then four heads are even better. The veal, beef, sheep and goat sectors have come together in an effort to investigate biosecurity gaps in the livestock sector.

Recently, the Agricultural Adaptation Council (AAC) approved funding of \$189,060.00 to help support the collective efforts of the four sectors. Kim Turnbull, Chair of the AAC Board of Directors is encouraged by the collaboration of the four organizations. "These animals share common disease risks and are raised in similar environments, therefore, these commodity groups are a natural work unit, in proceeding towards enhancing the livestock industry in Ontario," says Turnbull.

The Ontario Veal Association (OVA), the Ontario Cattlemen's Association (OCA), the Ontario Sheep Marketing Agency (OSMA) and the Ontario Dairy Goat Co-operative (ODGC) have engaged eBiz Professionals Inc. to manage the project and provide a strategic analysis of the current state of biosecurity and emergency preparedness in the four sectors from inputs suppliers, through production activities to processing.

One of the goals of this project is to prepare these four sectors to move to the same level of preparedness and biosecurity as the poultry industries. The pork sector has recently completed a similar study and is now ready to secure funds for implementation of their biosecurity and emergency preparedness plans. "The approach being taken by the veal, beef, sheep and goat sectors is consistent with work previously done in these other sectors. What has been learned in earlier work will be used here, and we will also ensure that the outcomes fit with the proposed national standards for biosecurity," said Ian Richardson, President of eBiz. "All of our livestock industries deserve to have the knowledge and resources to reduce the impact of animal disease."

The project, supported by government and other industry partners will help the veal, beef, sheep and goat industries prepare for implementation in 2010, and allow them to tap into Growing Forward funding for biosecurity and traceability initiatives. "On behalf of the goat sector, we are thrilled to be working with our livestock counterparts in order to better position ourselves for future funding and programs," stated ODGC General Manager Lisa Thompson.

The project will look at production limiting diseases of economic significance in each sector on which enhanced biosecurity measures could have an impact at the farm level by reducing mortality and decreasing costs of production.

"Saving livestock farmers money on the bottom line is something all our sectors can benefit from and by looking at the production limiting diseases we can see how implementing biosecurity protocols can make a difference everyday" stated OCA Policy Advisor Jennifer Snively.

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At the same time, the work being completed will also examine emergency preparedness and the ability of the sectors to respond. “Like a good insurance policy, you will never know the true value of the investment until you really need to rely on it in an emergency situation” suggests OSMA General Manager Murray Hunt.

“This project is very proactive in nature. We are collectively looking at the gaps that exist now so that we can start to address how we can fill them in” suggests OVA Executive Director Jennifer Haley. “By working together, our four groups can avoid duplication and discover synergies that will ultimately benefit livestock farmers” she added.

Work is well underway through the study of the auction market node, the development of lists of diseases for each sector and the mapping of supply chain relationships. The next phase of the project begins immediately with the formation of working groups, a broader industry consultation and data collection. The project is scheduled to be completed by June 2010.

Funding for this project was provided in part by Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada's Advancing Canadian Agriculture and Agri-Food Program, which is delivered in Ontario by the Agricultural Adaptation Council.

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