



NEW ASSISTANT CHIEF PROVINCIAL VETERINARIAN

The Chief Provincial Veterinarian's Office is pleased to announce that Dr. Gerald Hauer has joined our office as the Assistant Chief Provincial Veterinarian. Formerly in practice specializing in farmed cervids and bison, Dr. Hauer was Alberta's provincial bison specialist. His extensive background in alternative livestock health and management practices is a welcome addition to our office and the Food Safety Division at Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development (AAFRD).

BOVINE SPONGIFORM ENCEPHALOPATHY (BSE)

- Alberta has participated in Canada's BSE surveillance program since 1996. From 1996 to the end of 2003, AAFRD tested 2,603 cattle for BSE. All but one was negative for the disease. This level of surveillance exceeded the Office International des Epizooties (OIE) recommendations for a country free of BSE.
- Under the OIE guidelines, Canada currently considers itself as "minimal risk" for BSE. In order to maintain this classification and avoid becoming a country of "unknown" risk, Canada must prove that the prevalence of BSE in the adult cattle herd is less than one in one million animals. To meet this challenge, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) announced enhancements to Canada's BSE surveillance program targeting at least 8,000 high-risk animals in 2004 and at least 30,000 yearly thereafter.
- Alberta has 35 per cent of Canada's adult herd and 2,780 Alberta cattle must be tested for BSE in 2004. At least 10,425 cattle must be tested every year after that. As of August 2004, just over 1,000 Alberta cattle had been tested for BSE this year.

- On September 10, 2004, AAFRD announced an *Enhanced BSE Surveillance Program*. It offers reimbursements to farmers, veterinarians and provincial abattoirs over and above proposed CFIA reimbursement to encourage the submission of eligible samples for BSE testing.
- Under the Alberta program, producers will receive \$150, and abattoirs will receive \$75 per eligible sample to offset the costs associated with sample collection, submission and carcass storage. Veterinarians will be reimbursed for their services and expenses incurred to evaluate the animal, obtain the appropriate brain sample and submit it for BSE testing.
- The program will only provide reimbursements to the producer for testable samples from eligible animals. Eligible cattle are over 30 months of age and fall into one or more of the following categories: dead, down, distressed, or diseased (the 4Ds).
 - Dead: The animal is found dead from undetermined causes.
 - Down: The animal is down or unable to get up or walk without assistance.
 - Distressed: The animal is presented for emergency slaughter, **OR** is emaciated (has a body condition score of 1) and must be euthanized for humane reasons.
 - Diseased: The animal is thin (has a body condition score of 2 or less) **AND** exhibits obvious clinical disease that is unlikely to respond to treatment.
- *Owners believing they have an animal that is eligible under this program should call their veterinary practitioner or the CFIA.* A CFIA technician or private veterinarian must determine the animal's eligibility under this program.

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- An animal of any age, in poor condition, that displays disturbances in behaviour, sensation or locomotion consistent with BSE may be a “BSE suspect” and is not eligible under this program. These animals must be reported directly to the CFIA.
- Sampled carcasses will be tagged with a unique white tag identifying them as “BSE-sampled” carcasses. Producers or abattoirs must retain control of these carcasses until the test results are known.
- For more information about this program and application forms, contact the Rural Services Division at AAFRD (780) 422-9167, toll-free by dialing 310-0000 first. Information is also available on Ropin’ the Web at: www.agric.gov.ab.ca
- Information about the federal BSE Surveillance Program and other BSE information can be found on the CFIA website at: www.inspection.gc.ca
- As of September 30, 2004, only four horses have been confirmed positive for WNV, based on 2004 horse surveillance. Weekly statistics are published on the Chief Provincial Veterinarian website at: [http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/\\$department/deptdocs.nsf/all/cpv8654?opendocument](http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/$department/deptdocs.nsf/all/cpv8654?opendocument)
- Vaccines against WNV are licensed in Canada for use in horses and are available from veterinarians.
- The best way to prevent WNV infection is to avoid exposure to mosquitoes. Animals can be housed in screened structures and outdoor activities avoided during dawn and dusk, when mosquitoes are the most active. Using topical insect repellants and/or smudges may also be useful. Reduce potential mosquito breeding sites by eliminating shallow, standing water, cleaning watering troughs weekly and keeping grass levels short around buildings and pastures.
- More information about WNV is available at: [http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/\\$department/deptdocs.nsf/all/cpv4377?opendocument](http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/$department/deptdocs.nsf/all/cpv4377?opendocument)

WEST NILE VIRUS (WNV)

- WNV is a mosquito-borne virus that potentially causes inflammation of the brain and spinal cord in horses, birds and humans.
- Mosquitoes acquire the virus by feeding on infected wild birds, which are the primary reservoir of the disease. Although there are over 40 species of mosquitoes in Alberta, only the *Culex* species carry WNV infection.
- WNV in horses is a reportable disease in Alberta. This means anyone knowing of, or suspecting a case of WNV in horses, must report it to the Chief Provincial Veterinarian at (780) 427-3448.
- AAFRD’s 2003 WNV horse surveillance program detected the virus in 170 horses, of which 59 (34.7 per cent) died or were euthanized due to complications of the disease.
- A complete summary of WNV in horses in Alberta in 2003 is available on the Chief Provincial Veterinarian website at: [http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/\\$department/deptdocs.nsf/all/cpv4264?opendocument](http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/$department/deptdocs.nsf/all/cpv4264?opendocument)

NEW CERVID (Elk and Deer) IMPORT PROTOCOLS

- On September 2, 2004, the Alberta Government announced a new protocol for the importation of cervids (elk and deer) from across North America for production use on Alberta farms.
- A separate protocol, exclusively for farmed cervids from Saskatchewan, has also been implemented to allow qualifying cervids into Alberta for immediate slaughter at federally registered processing plants.
- Both protocols only allow the importation of healthy animals that have a history of being monitored through vigorous surveillance programs, to ensure that CWD or other diseases are not brought into Alberta.
- The new import protocols allow Alberta marketers and processors and Saskatchewan elk farmers to increase the number of animals available to them to satisfy the growing demand for elk meat in North America and Europe.

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AVIAN INFLUENZA

- Avian Influenza (AI) is a highly contagious viral infection that can affect all species of birds. Severe illness and death can occur in domestic poultry flocks.
- AI is classified into two categories: low pathogenic and highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI), based on the severity of the illness in poultry. Sometimes, low pathogenic AI viruses can mutate into HPAI.
- In early 2004, 10 countries in Southeast Asia were affected by HPAI. The disease re-established itself in Thailand, Vietnam and Malaysia in late summer 2004. For more information about the situation in Southeast Asia, please go to the Chief Provincial Veterinarian website at: [http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/\\$department/deptdocs.nsf/all/cpv4264?opendocument](http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/$department/deptdocs.nsf/all/cpv4264?opendocument)
- In February 2004, an outbreak of HPAI was detected in British Columbia's Fraser Valley. It eventually affected 42 commercial operations and 11 backyard flocks.
- HPAI is a reportable disease in Canada. The Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) is responsible for disease control under the authority of the *Health of Animals Act*.
- The CFIA's control program included establishing a 5-km surveillance zone around the two quarantined index premises, a 10-km surveillance zone around those and a control zone encompassing the entire Fraser Valley, where strict movement restrictions were enforced. Subsequent farms were quarantined, as required.
- As of July 9, 2004, poultry farms in British Columbia were allowed to restock. By August 18, 2004 all movement restrictions had also been lifted.
- A total of 17 million birds that were either infected or exposed to the virus were depopulated in the control effort.
- A summary of the HPAI outbreak in British Columbia is available on the Chief Provincial Veterinarian website at: [http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/\\$department/deptdocs.nsf/all/cpv4264?opendocument](http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/$department/deptdocs.nsf/all/cpv4264?opendocument)
- The Alberta poultry industry has been proactively developing an emergency contingency plan in the event a highly contagious poultry disease is ever detected in Alberta.
- The plan identifies potential technical, logistical and managerial resources, which may be required from the Alberta poultry industry to assist in a disease control operation.

FINDING INFORMATION

Ropin' the Web (AAFRD)

www.agric.gov.ab.ca

Chief Provincial Veterinarian

[http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/\\$department/deptdocs.nsf/all/cpv4264](http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/$department/deptdocs.nsf/all/cpv4264)

Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA)

www.inspection.gc.ca