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Alberta suspends target date for mandatory age verification of cattle

Calgary... The Alberta government is postponing the target date for mandatory age verification of cattle while national livestock traceability initiatives take shape, says Doug Horner, Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development.

“Industry supports age verification and has made significant progress in submitting birthdates of their cattle and we know that premium prices are being paid for age-verified cattle. This progress allows us the flexibility to suspend our original target date of April 1, 2007,” Horner said. “Markets exist for age-verified cattle and producers should continue to submit birthdates of all calves born from 2006 onward.”

Horner says the government remains committed to a national traceability system that will open export markets that require age certification. The government will continue to work with industry to ensure the necessary technology and infrastructure is available to implement a real-time age verification system across key points in the Canadian cattle supply chain. To date, more than 2.5 million birth date records have been submitted to the Canadian Cattle Identification Agency’s (CCIA) website, with Alberta accounting for more than 55 per cent of the beef cattle.

Horner added he is optimistic that substantive progress will be made on a national livestock traceability system, with participation from all provinces, territories and industry. “We know there are opportunities to expand our markets, and age verification is just one of many initiatives assuring our international customers that Canada’s traceability system is second to none.”

Although a new target date for mandatory age verification has not been set, industry consultation on the regulatory changes required to establish mandatory age verification is being planned for the spring of 2007.

Producers can learn more about voluntary age verification by visiting www.canadaid.ca.

- 30 -

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