



BC's AGRI-FOOD

Update



Honourable Pat Bell
Minister of Agriculture and Lands

Featuring News From the Agriculture Sector of B.C.'s Ministry of Agriculture and Lands

MAY 2006

FROM THE DESK OF PAT BELL

Spring has finally arrived in B.C. and with it comes the start of a very busy time of year in the agriculture industry.

We celebrated Agriculture Day at the Legislature on April 3 when I announced a new provincial fair program. Agricultural fairs and exhibitions are held throughout the summer and are a great vehicle for showcasing agriculture. The agriculture industry exists in every community in B.C. and I think it's important that we do more to promote the importance of the industry and the people who work in it. Agricultural fairs and exhibitions also help to increase the public's awareness of the wide variety of B.C. agriculture products and the contribution our farmers make to B.C.'s economy.

In April, we had the first confirmed case of BSE, or mad cow disease, in B.C. While this was a challenge for B.C. and for the industry, it demonstrates the national

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Minister Pat Bell is joined in front of the Legislature by Minister of Health George Abbott, 1st VP of the B.C. Association of Fairs and Exhibitions Don Gedlaman, Parliamentary Secretary for Agriculture Planning Val Roddick and 4-H participants from around the Island to celebrate Agriculture Day in B.C.

B.C. Celebrates Agriculture Day

April 3, 2006 was B.C. Agriculture Day at the legislature. Hosted by the B.C. Agriculture Council and the Ministry of Agriculture and Lands, B.C. Agriculture Day is when British Columbians recognize and celebrate the province's farming industry, its people and the benefits of healthy eating.

During Agriculture Day celebrations, Minister Bell announced a new program in partnership with the B.C. Association of Agricultural Fairs and Exhibitions (BCAAFE) to expand the number of agricultural events across the province. Part of the promotional plan calls for fairs and exhibitions to showcase B.C. grown and raised agriculture products. In addition to its annual base funding of \$150,000, the Province is providing \$225,000 to the BCAAFE in order to help it develop an enhanced recognition program and fair expansion strategy. A provincial fair for B.C. will also be introduced.

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surveillance system is working to confirm the low prevalence of BSE in Canada. We are pleased that the response from the international community has been positive and we continue to work with the meat processing sector to protect both human and animal health. Timely and transparent surveillance and detection is important to maintaining the viability of our beef industry.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to commend staff at the Abbotsford Agriculture Centre for their professionalism in dealing with an incident that occurred in late March. When a suspicious package was delivered to the centre, ministry staff acted quickly and decisively to deal with it and the package turned out to be harmless. On a daily basis, the staff in our Abbotsford office do exceptional work related to avian influenza, BSE and more, but their professionalism in dealing with this unusual situation deserves particular recognition.

Happy spring, everyone!

Pat Bell

Minister of Agriculture and Lands

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Ministry of
Agriculture and Lands

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Members of the B.C. 4-H program, along with some of their animals, also took part in Agriculture Day. 4-H has a long tradition as a key partner in the history and success of B.C.'s agri-food sector. B.C.'s agricultural industry is facing a worker shortage as more and more farmers, ranchers and producers retire. Tremendous opportunity now exists in agriculture and that's a message we need to share with others, especially young people. An aging workforce is an issue we can deal with by educating B.C.'s youth, and 4-H is a fantastic vehicle for promoting all that's great in B.C. agriculture.

We look forward to seeing everyone at Agriculture Day 2007!

Agritourism in British Columbia

This is the time of year when many people plan their summer vacations and agritourism is starting to play an increasingly prominent role in people's travel plans.

Agritourism is recognized as one of the fastest growing tourism products in the world. B.C. is well positioned to take advantage of this growing industry, as the diversity of product offered in the province is enormous and is particularly available in rural B.C.

Agritourism covers a wide range of activities, from stopping at a U-pick farm, to visiting an ostrich farm on Vancouver Island, to riding trails on a "living", working ranch. There are country fairs, rodeos, wine tours, rural bed and breakfasts, festivals, tours of food processing facilities – all of these are part of the agricultural infrastructure of the province. That wide range of activities offers a lot of potential for B.C.'s agritourism industry arising from the hosting of the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games.

Agritourism provides many advantages for farm operators, rural and urban communities, and for the tourism sector as a whole. Agritourism helps to open up new markets and provides employment for many people in B.C. It also opens up the world of agriculture for people not engaged in the industry and creates awareness of local agricultural products.

Census of Agriculture

On May 16, farm operators can speak out and count themselves in as part of Canada's farm community.