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CANADA'S FIRST MOBILE ABATTOIR OPENS IN YUKON

WHITEHORSE – This week's Fireweed Farmers' Market in Shipyards Park featured tours of Yukon's brand new mobile abattoir fully equipped with slaughter and chilling facilities housed in a fifth wheel custom built for Yukon conditions.

Yukon government's \$175,000 investment in the mobile abattoir will leverage federal funding under the Canada-Yukon Agriculture Policy Framework to operate the mobile abattoir for a five year period.

"This investment should grow the livestock industry and dramatically increase the amount of commercially available, locally grown, government inspected beef, bison, pork and elk for sale in Yukon," Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources Archie Lang said. "By managing the operation of the mobile abattoir for the first few years we can establish the viability of the operation, meet or exceed industry and inspection standards for environmental health, food safety and food quality, and ensure it meets the needs of Yukon's meat producers."

Local retailers have indicated their desire to purchase and provide locally produced meat that is competitive in quality and price to the imported red meat it would replace.

"We expect a high demand because the quality is excellent," said Lang. "Yukon grown meat is hormone free, raised in pristine Yukon conditions, and since the abattoir will travel to the farms, the animals will not experience the stress of transportation to the abattoir or crowding on feed lots as they do down south. These are qualities many Yukoners will appreciate and factor into their purchasing decisions once the products are regularly available in stores and restaurants."

Marketing the processed halves and quarters to commercial butchers and packers will be the responsibility of the livestock producers.

"The Yukon government has invested in the necessary infrastructure to support commercial production and marketing of livestock. It's now up to Yukon livestock and game farmers to seize this opportunity to enter the local retail and wholesale markets," Lang said.

The mobile abattoir will begin operations on southern Yukon livestock producers' farms next week. Farmers can get price information and make arrangements for slaughter services by contacting the contractor directly at 393-4978 or by email at lock@northwestel.net.

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Backgrounder - Yukon's Mobile Abattoir

Yukon government has budgeted up to \$30,000 annually to operate the mobile abattoir. This cost is expected to decrease as use of the mobile abattoir increases.

It is expected that Yukon commercial meat products will be competitively priced for consumers.

Tait's Custom Trailer Sales, a locally operated business, won the tender to provide the mobile abattoir. The U.S. built Featherlite Fifth Wheel arrived in Yukon August 27, 2006. It is custom designed for Yukon conditions and will provide slaughter, inspection and refrigerated transportation services for red meats such as beef, bison, pork, elk, sheep and goats.

The Yukon government has contracted the operation and maintenance of the mobile abattoir to Art Lock of Whitehorse. As a former Yukon hog farmer and outfitter, he has slaughtering experience as well as the mechanical expertise to maintain the fifth wheel and his truck unit.

Yukon has a meat inspector who will provide inspection services during the slaughter process to ensure all territorial regulations and health guidelines are met or exceeded.

The mobile abattoir can provide refrigerated transportation to a meat processor for cold storage, aging, butchering and wrapping services. Farmers will be responsible for marketing their product to retailers, either directly or through arrangements with the meat processor.

The mobile abattoir will focus on serving livestock producers, including game farmers, in southern Yukon. Partridge Creek Abattoir north of Stewart Crossing is expected to continue operating and is the only Yukon facility equipped to handle poultry.

Yukon's mobile abattoir is patterned on one in operation in Washington State. It is the first mobile abattoir in Canada and has created a good deal of interest from other Canadian jurisdictions. British Columbia and Alberta are both looking at getting mobile abattoirs to provide their smaller livestock producers with access to inspected slaughter services.

The Yukon Game Growers Association, the Yukon Agriculture Association and other Yukon industry stakeholders have long promoted the need for a mobile abattoir in order to break into the commercial market and grow the livestock sector in Yukon's agricultural industry. According to Energy Mines and Resources' biannual *Agriculture State of the Industry Report*, Yukon consumption rates and sales patterns indicate an annual consumer and visitor demand for 6,000 beef, 12,000 hogs, and up to 200 head of both elk and bison.

The mobile abattoir will help Yukon livestock producers gain access to the commercial market. As they increase livestock production to meet that market, demand for Yukon grown grain and feed are expected to increase, as well as demand for infrastructure such as outbuildings.

The abattoir goes into service during the first week of September at LaPrairie Bison Farm. An inspector from the Canadian Food Inspection Agency will be in attendance to provide some initial training and oversight to ensure the service and the food safety standards are top quality.