



For immediate release:

Transport tops agenda of key livestock care initiatives

Calgary, Alta., March 28, 2006: High standards to support the well-being of livestock during transportation are a top priority of the livestock industry in Alberta and across Canada.

“Our industry has taken a strong stand against the loading of unfit livestock,” says David Hyink, a poultry farmer and Chair of Alberta Farm Animal Care (AFAC), speaking at the Livestock Care Conference in Red Deer. “We’re also supporting standards related to time in transit, stocking densities and the training of livestock handlers.”

AFAC is a partnership of Alberta’s major livestock groups, with a mandate to promote responsible, humane animal care within the livestock industry. Among its many initiatives related to livestock transport, AFAC has led the development of humane handling guidelines, endorsed by all respective livestock organizations, the Alberta Veterinary Medical Association and the Alberta Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA).

It has also implemented a Quality Livestock Transport (QLT) training program for livestock truckers, shippers and receivers, developed with broad input and support from both livestock and transportation industries.

“The QLT program is an example of the progress that can be made by livestock and transportation industries working together hand in hand,” says Tim O’Byrne, an advisor on livestock transport. “We started out small, but today our livestock transportation advisory group includes broad representation of all the key players and we’ve developed modules for nearly all the major types of livestock. The professionalism and response we’ve seen from all parties has been outstanding.”

Also at the Livestock Care Conference, Dr. Martin Appelt of the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) provided an overview of progress on the CFIA’s new process to examine changes to Health of Animals Livestock Transport Regulations.

The process toward updating national livestock transport regulations is long overdue, noted Appelt, who is heading up initiative. “The current regulations are more than 30 years old and generally include few defining terms on specific guidelines for handling livestock. The

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amendments we're considering are focused on providing clarification, by defining terms such as what exactly is an unfit animal, and including specific guidelines such as maximum loading densities."

Developing standards that are tailored to Canada's needs is a primary concern, says Appelt. Many international standards, including those developed by the new World Organization for Animal Health (OIE), largely reflect the needs of European countries.

"Canada would certainly be considered an 'A student' with regard to meeting the expectations of the OIE guidelines, and we intend to stay that way," says Appelt. "But that doesn't mean we have to do something just because someone else is doing it. We want our guidelines first and foremost to reflect the best humane animal transport practices for Canada."

Coordinating industry activities at a national level is critical to the success of this and other initiatives, says Gordon Coukell, Chair of the new National Farm Animal Care Council (NFACC). AFAC and other provincial farm animal care organizations are all members of NFACC, created in 2005.

"NFACC is looking to provide a national perspective that will benefit all industry stakeholders, including those in provinces without farm animal care groups," says Coukell. "This will include monitoring what is happening at the international level, through the OIE. We need to ensure the growing interest in animal welfare issues internationally is well understood, so these issues don't impact on our ability to trade."

The 2006 Livestock Care Conference featured leading speakers on livestock care topics including global developments, training issues, humane transportation, research and communications. It drew more than 170 livestock industry participants. More information is available at www.afac.ab.ca.

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