



For immediate release:

Ponoka EMS trained in Livestock Emergency Response

Calgary, AB, Apr. 7, 2009: “Thousands of animals are being transported daily along Alberta highways, accidents happen, that includes vehicles transporting livestock. When that happens, we have to have the right tools and the training to help these animals and keep the people who are working with them safe,” says Corporal Dave Heaslip RCMP, Livestock Investigator. “Training is important as accidents and disasters involving livestock require a coordinated approach amongst first responders (firefighters, police), producers, government agencies and volunteers.”

To address this need, Cpl Heaslip and the Ponoka Fire Department organized a Livestock Emergency Response Course and Mock Disaster Session. This session, held on March 27 and 28, also included euthanasia training. Over 35 fire fighters, RCMP, dispatchers, tow truck drivers, Calgary Bylaw officers and industry representatives attended.

The Livestock Emergency Response Course, first developed in 1998 by Jennifer Woods, a livestock handling specialist and the Alberta Farm Animal Care, covers livestock behaviour and handling, responding to motor vehicle accidents involving livestock, livestock rescue, euthanasia plus laws, liability and scene security. The Ponoka program, delivered by Woods, included a 6 hour classroom session and a ‘mock’ disaster training.

At 1 pm, the Ponoka Fire Department received the call of the ‘mock’ disaster, a livestock trailer rollover. They dispatched fire trucks, ambulance and the Red Deer County Agricultural Services Board Livestock Emergency Response trailer to the scene. The emergency response trailer contains tools and materials to assist emergency response workers in managing crisis situations involving livestock, particularly on Alberta’s highways.

For the mock disaster, a previously roll livestock trailer and tractor were set on its side to simulate an accident scene. EMS used this unit to practice the proper cuts to humane release animals. When EMS arrived on the scene they quickly evaluated the situation, medical personnel attended to the driver. Then, a temporary corral was set up to contain the loose animals.

Two firefighters were posted on the top of the liner to see the position of the livestock in the trailer while the rest of the crew prepared and cut a ‘door’ in the roof of the trailer with a reciprocating saw. The animals were then loaded into a stock trailer and taken to a nearby facility for rest and evaluation.

RCMP officers participated in an emergency euthanasia training session. This training included determining when and how to humanely euthanize livestock, the safety procedures and confirmation of death.

Sponsors for this training included Alberta Farm Animal Care (AFAC), Ponoka Fire Department, Randy Hammond Trucking, Lyle Zimmer, Cal-Nash Trucking, Ponoka Stampede Association Vold Jones and Vold Auction Co. Ltd. Cattle, Ground Haul Trailer and the County of Red Deer.

- 30 -

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