



*For immediate release:*

## **Dedicated Alberta champion of farm animal welfare honored at Livestock Care Conference**

**Calgary, Alta., March 31, 2009:** Alberta Farm Animal Care (AFAC) has recognized a lifetime of leadership in caring for livestock in Alberta with the presentation of its Award of Distinction to Dr. Ray Fenton of High River, Alta.

Fenton, a veterinarian and livestock industry leader in the province for nearly 40 years, was integral in the founding of AFAC, spearheading numerous other provincial and national initiatives, and participating in the development of recommended national codes of practice for the care and handling of farm animals.

“Ray is a dedicated champion of farm animal welfare,” says Susan Church, AFAC manager. “He is the father of AFAC. He has contributed to many leadership initiatives on behalf of the continuous improvement of farm animal welfare in Alberta and beyond. No-one is more deserving of this award.”

The Award of Distinction for Industry Leadership was presented at the recent Livestock Care Conference, March 27 in Red Deer, hosted by AFAC, which drew over 140 participants and featured a lineup of leading speakers on livestock care progress in Canada and North America.

It is fitting in the 15th year of AFAC to recognize a man who has been integral to many of the animal welfare progress milestones of both the organization and the industry, says Church. “Ray warned against a head in the sand approach. He was ahead of his time and wise in his understanding of how the industry needed to continually take charge of improving animal care.”

Fenton was raised on a mixed farm near Grande Prairie and has worked all his life with farm animals, including as a farmer raising cattle and elk, as a veterinarian and as an extension specialist.

He graduated from the second class of the Western College of Veterinary Medicine in 1970 and spent a decade in private practice in Ontario and Alberta before becoming a field veterinarian with Alberta Agriculture, based out of Airdrie. There, Fenton worked with large animal veterinarians and their clients assessing and solving herd disease and production problems.

In 1990, Fenton became head of the Animal Health Management Branch and the Livestock Market Inspection program, which included assuming animal welfare responsibilities for Alberta Agriculture. He has been directly involved in the development of national Recommended Codes of Practice for the Care and Handling of farm animals – representing the Canadian Veterinary Medical Association on the review committee for the beef code and chairing the development of the sheep code.

Fenton has long championed farm animal care progress as a leader in numerous organizations and as a speaker at countless industry meetings. In his presentations titled “The Nervous Nineties,” he predicted that food safety, animal welfare and the environment would be major issues of the future.

In 1992, Fenton was part of the team that incorporated the Alberta Foundation for Animal Care, as AFAC was then known, and served as its inaugural interim Chair. He remained on the AFAC board representing Alberta Agriculture until he retired from the department in 2001.

“Ray himself has noted that it was a trust-building exercise getting commodity groups to agree to have an outside group to provide a lead role on an interest common to all the groups in terms of animal welfare,” says Church. “But we are here 15 years later to attest to success of that venture.”

One of the first milestones for AFAC was the Humane Livestock Transportation in Alberta Study—a first of its kind in Canada, if not North America. “Ray was instrumental in its content focus and recommendations,” says Church.

Fenton also led the formation of protocols for the AFAC Animal Care ALERT line and was the lynchpin in establishing the Alberta Livestock Protection System (ALPS) – a communication framework and dialog amongst animal protection enforcement agencies and the industry, through AFAC. In 2003, Fenton became the first Canadian on-call animal care veterinarian for the livestock industry. He has since assisted hundreds of producers and thousands of head of livestock through difficult times with what colleagues have described as his quiet, easy going, yet persistent demeanor.

“Ray represents all of the ideals that have driven the Alberta livestock industry to band together, to make the welfare of animals their number one priority,” says Pam Miller, dispatch coordinator for the ALERT line. “We and the farm animals of Alberta have been fortunate to be the beneficiary.”

The Award of Distinction for Industry Leadership honors those who set the bar higher with expectations regarding animal welfare by leading by example and demonstrating leadership and commitment in dealing with animal welfare issues. AFAC is a partnership of Alberta's major livestock groups with a mandate to promote responsible, humane animal care within the livestock industry. More information on AFAC and the Livestock Care Conference is available at [www.afac.ab.ca](http://www.afac.ab.ca).

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