Agri-News

November 27, 2006

Alberta Veterinary Surveillance Network takes "snapshots" of livestock health

Veterinary Practice Surveillance (VPS), a new data-sharing system of the Alberta Veterinary Surveillance Network (AVSN), provides Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development with timely access to the health data of Alberta's cattle.

"Veterinary practitioners often visit farms and ranches," says Dr. Jagdish Patel, veterinarian with Alberta Agriculture's food safety division, Edmonton. "When they share the livestock health information that they collect with us, they help generate data that allows us to monitor livestock health in Alberta. Information that participating veterinarians share with Alberta Agriculture does not identify individual farms or ranches, but rather gives diagnostic data that scientists can use to watch for emerging disease trends."

Food safety division veterinarians use the information to monitor the health of Alberta livestock, and investigate anything that could turn into a significant disease event. "By collecting this data we hope to show our trading partners that we have the veterinary infrastructure to provide proper animal health services to our producers," says Patel.

"Currently, there are 24 to 26 private veterinary practices regularly participating in VPS. Combined, there are over 1.25 million cattle on the farms that these veterinarians visit," says Patel. "This proves the strong veterinary infrastructure that exists in the province, which is important to market access. It means Alberta livestock health as it relates to cattle is monitored, and the province is in a position to respond promptly to emerging cattle health issues.

"The system is just beginning to generate reports. This is a new approach to collecting animal health data. We are still developing, testing and refining the fine points of the system."

VPS was created with a vision: to promote the livestock industry. "Over the years Albertans have learned what it takes to compete in a global marketplace," says Patel. "Innovative approaches to surveillance, such as VPS, tell the world that Alberta is committed to verifying the health of its livestock. VPS is both a detection and a warning system. Information about unusual disease problems reported by one or a few veterinarians can be used to manage and monitor the problem."

Cont'd on page 2

This Week

Alberta Veterinary Surveillance Network takes "snapshots" of livestock health	1
Award-winning author speaking at the 2007 Horse Breeders and Owners Conference	2
Rural Alberta's Development Fund – open for business	2
Learning the 'keys' of being a Key Leader	3
Briefs	4

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Alberta AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

To validate the health of Alberta's livestock, summary reports created using surveillance information will be shared with other authorized organizations such as marketing agencies and the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA), for example.

VPS is one component of the AVSN, a comprehensive, integrated surveillance system of Alberta livestock for diseases of importance to market access, public health and food safety. AVSN is comprised of:

- Veterinary Practice Surveillance
- Livestock Pathology Consultation Program (LPCP) – a program that assists private veterinarians with pathology consultation on complex disease investigations
- Livestock Disease Investigation Network (LDIN) – a team of epidemiologists, veterinarians and pathologists that investigates significant disease problems

At this point, VPS is managing data only from cattle. A project to collect data from poultry is under development.

Contact: Dr. Jagdish Patel
(780) 644-5093

Award-winning author speaking at the 2007 Horse Breeders and Owners Conference

The organizing committee of the annual Horse Breeders and Owners Conference (HBOC) is pleased to include Cherry Hill on the 2007 agenda. Hill is an award-winning author of more than 30 books and videos, and over 1000 articles on horse training and care. A horse show judge for several national breed organizations for 25 years, Hill also taught college equine courses from 1975 to 1985 in the U.S. and Canada, including Olds College. She has instructed courses in horse behaviour, ground training, mounted training, Western horsemanship, English equitation, riding instructor training, equine evaluation, stable management and equine production.

"Hill has been a free-lance equine photo-journalist since 1975, and has written for such publications as *Horse & Rider, Quarter Horse Journal, Chronicle of the Horse, American Farrier's Journal, Horse Journal, Western Horseman*, and over 20 other national equine publications," says Les Burwash, manager of horse programs with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development and member of the Alberta Horse Breeders and Owners Conference organizing committee, Airdrie. "Her subject, ***Better Horsekeeping***, promises to be informative and entertaining, and is sure to engage those who attend her presentation."

Hill received the Colorado Authors' League Top Hand Award twice, in 1995 for *101 Arena Exercises* and in 1999 for *101 Horsemanship and Equitation Patterns*. The Top Hand Award is one of the most distinguished writing awards with competition from fiction and non-fiction books on any topic. She was also the recipient of the 1992 American Horse Publications first place award for editorial excellence in the category Service to the Reader for a series she wrote on liability in the equine industry.

In 2002, Hill was the recipient of the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA) Henry Bergh Children's Book Honour in the Non-Fiction Companion Animal Category for her book *Cherry Hill's Horse Care for Kids*. The book was selected for its outstanding ability to teach young readers a new way to care for animals and the natural resources that we all share.

Hill is one of the 17 internationally recognized speakers who will make presentations at the 2007 HBOC. Albertans who breed or own horses, work in the equine industry in some capacity, or are simply horse enthusiasts, won't want to miss the 25th anniversary Horse Breeders and Owners Conference.

The conference, organized by the Horse Industry Association of Alberta and the horse industry section of Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, is being held in Red Deer on January 12 to 14, 2007.

Conference pre-registration is $85 per person and cost for additional individuals registered at the same time from the same farm is $60. Registration at the door is $85 per person and no farm discounts will be available.

For more information about the 2007 conference, contact Teresa van Bryce, manager, Horse Industry Association of Alberta, (403) 948-8521 or Les Burwash (403) 948-8538. Information is also available on the association's website at www.albertahorseindustry.ca or by calling the Horse Industry Association of Alberta at (403) 948-8521.

Contact: Les Burwash (403) 948-8538 *Teresa van Bryce (403) 948-8521*

Rural Alberta's Development Fund – open for business

Rural Alberta's Development Fund is now considering the first Expressions of Interest submitted for community-led projects. Funding from $50,000 to $5 million is available for projects that contribute to the growth, prosperity or quality of life of rural Alberta, and project applicants must provide 25 per cent or more of the overall cost of the project.

"Funding will be considered for a wide range of projects," says Terry Keyko, managing director with Rural Alberta's Development Fund. "Each project must demonstrate how it supports the community and must involve the community or communities where it will be implemented. It is not a fund for capital works projects."

Cont'd on page 3

Rural Alberta's Development Fund has set out the following criteria priorities:

- promote economic development in rural communities
- build community capacity
- facilitate opportunities to access health services
- expand learning and development opportunities
- sustain and enhance the quality of rural Alberta's environment
- provide opportunities for rural youth
- engage and support seniors
- encourage the participation of Aboriginal people

The first step rural communities and mid-sized cities need to take is the submission of an Expression of Interest, which is a two- to three-page outline of the proposed project. Expression of Interest forms are available on the Rural Alberta's Development Fund website at www.ruralalbertasfund.com or by calling the fund office. An Expression of Interest must be approved before a full proposal will be invited.

"Communities can submit an Expression of Interest at any time," says Keyko. "Submissions are reviewed on an on-going basis. The fund will notify applicants within four weeks of submission, and indicate approval, rejection or if more information is required."

Once an Expression of Interest is approved, applicants will be given sufficient time to submit detailed project proposals. A deadline for project proposals will be provided in the Expression of Interest approval letter.

Rural Alberta's Development Fund is a not-for-profit company incorporated in 2006 under Part-9 of the *Companies Act* (Alberta). Created by the Government of Alberta in support of communities, regional alliances and not-for-profit organizations, the funding is intended to assist the growth and prosperity of rural Alberta. For further information on the Fund, including criteria and required forms, visit the website at www.ruralalbertasfund.com or call toll free 1-877-940-7233.

The $100 million provided to the fund by the Government of Alberta will be used to invest in projects that stimulate economic growth and address rural challenges and opportunities. The fund is a key implementation initiative of the province's Rural Development Strategy, released in 2005. For more information on the strategy, go to www.rural.gov.ab.ca/strategy.

Contact: Rural Alberta's Development Fund
1-877-940-7233
info@ruralalbertasfund.com

Learning the 'keys' of being a Key Leader

On October 27 to 29, 2006, 4-H key leaders from across the province gathered for a weekend of learning, updating and reconnecting. The purpose of the Key Leader Training weekend was to educate key leaders and impart skills, knowledge and 4-H news to ensure that every club and district is receiving the most accurate and up-to-date information. Key leaders are selected by their district council on an annual basis to act as a support to districts and committees. Their exemplary service, their proven leadership abilities and their contagious enthusiasm form the basis of the selection criteria.

The weekend included many opportunities for information exchange, that always generates additional ideas and a lot of enthusiasm. The agenda included sessions on:

- risk management
- looking to the future – brainstorming ideas for the new Rural Development Fund
- community boards – vitality and volunteers – a check-up for 4-H
- introduction of the newly created Building 4-H Councils workshop module
- pledge and program planning – translating the 4 H agenda into individual clubs' agendas
- new 4-H resources
- tear two plans for 4-H Key Members
- the 90 years of 4-H in Alberta promotion and how to market the program in the summer of 2007
- introduction of new funding that is available to councils and clubs
- the three C's of 4-H – Club, Community, Country

"Key Leaders were keen to learn and eager to go back to their districts with great information on councils and work with other leaders to implement this new knowledge," says Jocelyn McKinnon, 4-H specialist and weekend coordinator.

The 4-H key leader training weekend was sponsored by UFA. For more information on the 4-H Key Leader program or Alberta 4-H, visit www.4h.ab.ca.

Contact: Jocelyn McKinnon
(780) 674-8250

Agri-News Briefs

New AOPA factsheets

The revised *Agricultural Operation Practices Act* (AOPA) factsheet ***Permits and Regulations for Existing Operations*** (Agdex #096-2) has been printed and posted to Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's website. This factsheet replaces the previous publication, *Existing Operations: How are they affected by the Agricultural Operation Practices Act*. The factsheet information was updated to reflect the AOPA regulatory amendments that came into effect on October 1, 2006. Additional publications are being developed, including a 2006 AOPA Reference Guide and other factsheets that apply to municipalities, cow/calf operations, horse owners, record keeping, manure spreading, minimum distance separation and neighbours of CFOs. Copies of the Act and Regulations and the ***AOPA Manure Characteristics and Land Base Code*** are also available. Copies of these publications can be ordered as follows:

- AOPA factsheets and Reference Guide or the Manure Characteristics and Land Base Code – call toll free at 1-800-292-5697
- copies of the legislation – contact the Queen's Printer Bookstore, (780) 427-4952 (dial 310-0000 to be connected toll free) or on-line at www.gov.ab.ca/qp

Electronic copies of these documents are available on Alberta Agriculture's website at www.agric.gov.ab.ca/publications (*free publications – general publications – environmental*) or by clicking on the main category *Livestock – Livestock Production – AOPA*, or doing an on-line search for *AOPA*.

New feature on AGC's internet price page

When visiting the Alberta Grain Commission's (AGC) price page, users can now convert grain prices per tonne to prices per bushel. This quick conversion will be helpful to farmers and other price users as they scan the market! The AGC elevator prices (daily) are at: www.agric.gov.ab.ca/app21/grainprices. The AGC feed grain prices (weekly) are found at: www.agric.gov.ab.ca/app21/grainprices.