

National Voluntary Beef Cattle Biosecurity Standard

Producers will soon have the opportunity to help shape what will become a national voluntary biosecurity standard for the beef cattle industry - and all without having to leave the farm. In the coming weeks many producers will be contacted and asked to participate in an on-farm consultation. The consultation will allow producers to share from the comfort of the kitchen table or farm office their current animal health related practices with trained personnel who understand the importance of animal health to the industry.

A series of questions will be conducted as part of the estimated two-hour consultation which will serve to benchmark current animal health practices, enabling the initiative to move forward based on informed discussion. The consultation is the first step of a four part process to developing a national standard for the industry. The intent is to develop a standard that will be cost-effective for producers to meet while also contributing to the profitable marketing of safe healthy food by addressing risks pertaining to animal health and in some cases food safety.

The national consultation will be conducted on a sample population of producers from feedlots and farm or ranch operations of varying size. Results will be considered in aggregate form only.

The initiative is being undertaken by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) and the CCA, with funding being provided under Agriculture Canada's Growing Forward. Assisting the CCA and the CFIA in this initiative is the Beef Biosecurity Advisory Group, comprised of representatives of industry, AAFC, provincial governments and academia.

A standard has already been developed for the poultry industry and biosecurity standards are in various early stages of development for the swine and dairy industries.

The beef cattle biosecurity standard is expected to be completed by June 2011, and will evolve on an ongoing basis.

Livestock Identification Services Ltd. (LIS) has been contracted to perform the on farm consultations in Alberta. A statistically random selection process was utilized in seeking volunteer producers to participate in this project. LIS' certified auditors (international Registry of Certified Auditors – IRCA) will be contacting producers in April to perform the consultation process.

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