

## What is Animal Health Canada?

Growing disease pressures domestically and internationally, such as porcine epidemic diarrhea virus (PEDv), Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) and African Swine Fever (ASF) are reinforcing the importance of a strong and cohesive approach to animal health and disease management in Canada. The recent OIE Performance of Veterinary Services Evaluation, and Canada's Plant and Animal Health Strategy have clearly articulated the importance of shared industry and government responsibility for animal health in Canada. Significant work has been undertaken to develop plans and strategies to support Canada's animal health infrastructure, however further investment in leadership is required in order to form a true government and industry partnership, particularly in emergency response and recovery.

The red meat and dairy industries, including many processors, do not feel they are well positioned to protect their businesses, farms and livelihoods if a major, multi-species border-closing infectious disease event comes to Canada. In an effort to address this issue, several leaders of the livestock, meat and dairy industries have agreed to champion the development of "Animal Health Canada", a potential new governance model, built on industry-government partnership in decision making, resource sharing and management. The goal is to strengthen Canada's capacity for animal disease prevention, preparedness and response, particularly to reduce fragmentation of accountabilities, achieve sustainability in resource commitments, increase timeliness of action and do more to protect business continuity and trade. While existing organizational mandates and commitments remain intact, the aim is to explore the relevant models – including international models like Animal Health Australia and Animal Health Ireland and domestic models like the Canadian Blood Services Agency– and prepare options for decision in 2019.

### Animal Health Canada Principles:

Five key principles have been agreed to by industry as part of the "Animal Health Canada" process for establishing a new governance model for managing animal health in Canada:

- 1) **Industry-Government Collaborative Decision Making and Management with an Independent and Enduring Mandate** – Animal health should be managed collaboratively with the expertise and resources of industry, government and the veterinary profession in order to maximize disease prevention, and facilitate rapid response and recovery in a manner objectively grounded in science and economics. The industry-government partnership model of animal health governance in Canada will require reasonable autonomy when delivering its mandate, including the possibility of new binding commitments from participating stakeholders.
- 2) **A Model Underpinned by Industry-Government Resource Sharing and Financial Commitment** – Industry and government should commit financial, human, scientific and technical resources to ensure certainty around the timing and effectiveness of animal health emergency response and economic recovery. This approach should include, where appropriate, the rationalization of existing resource commitments before

incremental contributions are made. The Australian “deed” model, and innovative insurance programs, should be explored.

3) **A Multi-Species Team Canada Approach that maximizes the strength of “front line” resources in disease prevention and emergency response** - The ability to successfully respond with speed and scale to contain a foreign animal disease outbreak that crosses species, shared inputs, and jurisdictions is dependent upon the commitment and participation of all and livestock and poultry sectors, value chain participants and levels of government. At the same time, we need a system that values the species-specific, hazard-specific planning and resources necessary for many disease risks.

4) **A Model That Helps Drive Action Across a Comprehensive, Evergreen Animal Health Strategy** – The industry-government partnership model of animal health governance in Canada must drive continuous improvement in animal disease risk management through national strategies and action plans covering the priority areas of disease surveillance, biosecurity programming, traceability, diagnostic capacity, emergency response, vaccine development and deployment, recovery planning, financial risk mitigation, animal health research and regulatory modernization.

5) **A Fresh Approach, Undertaken with Ambition and Pragmatism, Striving for Progress Not Perfection, With Accountability Resting on The Most Senior Industry and Government Leaders** – Industry and government leaders must be willing to own responsibility for making courageous decisions soon, not waiting for perfect consensus across all parties.

### **Key Animal Health Canada Activities and Priorities:**

- A letter signed by willing industry participants will be sent to federal, provincial and territorial Ministers of Agriculture to seek support for efforts to develop the Animal Health Canada concept grounded in industry-government partnership
- Working with government departments (notably CFIA and AAFC at the federal level), participating industry stakeholders are committed to engaging in an inclusive, time-bound “building process” that would (i) take stock of existing organizational capacities, mandates and resources for national disease prevention, response and recovery; (ii) assess synergies that could be achieved through the “Animal Health Canada” concept; (iii) evaluate the applicability of other public-private partnership models in Canada and other countries; and (iv) make recommendations for decision by Ministers at their meeting in summer 2019.
- A CEO level “Champions Steering Committee” will be established to demonstrate the importance of the initiative, ensure project timelines are met, encourage government engagement and support, and guide the efforts of the working group.
- As a sign of commitment, several companies and industry associations have already pledged financial and human resources to support the building process, including the engagement of necessary professional resources, expecting parallel resource commitments from governments. It is requested that processors pledge \$20,000; major producer associations contribute \$10,000;

and smaller associations contribute \$5,000 to support this critical work. Funds will be managed by the National Farmed Animal Health and Welfare Council following the development of a work plan and budget by the Animal Health Canada Committee in collaboration with government partners

If you have any questions please feel free to contact Dr. Megan Bergman, Executive Director of the National Farmed Animal Health and Welfare Council at 204-333-5375, or [megan@ahwcouncil.ca](mailto:megan@ahwcouncil.ca).