
NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
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March 16, 2023

Ministry of Agriculture and Food

B.C. protects farms from animal disease

VICTORIA – The Province is investing \$5 million to help protect B.C. farms from animal diseases, including avian influenza, swine fever, and foot-and-mouth disease, to help support a resilient food supply for British Columbians.

“This investment will provide B.C. farmers and ranchers with the support to plan and respond quicker and better to disease outbreaks,” said Pam Alexis, Minister of Agriculture and Food. “It is important that we continue to work together and stay vigilant to protect farmers and their animals, which protects B.C.’s economy and our food security.”

The funding will help B.C. farmers plan, prepare, prevent, and mitigate for animal diseases on their farms and ranches and provide co-ordinated emergency planning and training for the livestock and poultry sector.

“Animal diseases, such as avian influenza, have a huge impact on farmers. Funding that will help us plan for and mitigate the impacts of these diseases, is very welcomed,” said Mark Siemens, president, BC Egg producers association. “Poultry farmers particularly appreciate the fact that this funding is available to a wide variety of applicants so we can take advantage of best practices from across the animal agriculture sector.”

The funding will support industry associations with a variety of activities, including business planning, research, biosecurity measures and equipment purchases needed to respond to an animal disease outbreak.

Quick Facts:

- The Ministry of Agriculture and Food is the lead provincial ministry responsible for planning and preparing for animal disease outbreaks impacting the livestock and poultry sector.
- The ministry is expanding its ability to support industry and respond to animal disease events with the establishment of a new emergency management branch and the hiring of additional dedicated emergency management staff.
- The ministry’s Animal Health Centre, located in Abbotsford, currently handles more than 6,000 case submissions annually while diagnosing, monitoring and assisting in controlling and preventing diseases, such as avian influenza.
- The Province recently announced plans to invest in a new Animal Health Centre that will ensure a more robust response to disease and enhanced testing in the future.

A backgrounder follows.

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BACKGROUND

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Animal disease preparedness and response program

The new animal disease preparedness and response program is part of the \$200-million investment in food security initiatives recently announced by the Province.

The funding will support a variety of planning, preparedness and prevention and mitigation activities, including:

- hiring staff or contractors to conduct response planning activities;
- development or revision of animal disease or hazard plans;
- training and exercising the plans;
- procurement (purchase, rent, lease) of equipment required for response to a disease outbreak;
- contracting out response activities;
- training staff to use response equipment;
- research around improved disease outbreak response, such as depopulation methods;
- research of prevention/mitigation strategies, such as vaccination or biosecurity strategies, implementation of mitigation and biosecurity measures/strategies.

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