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Welcome to BCFPA's **BC Meating News**, providing information towards increasing livestock harvest and sales of high-quality, safe, BC-produced-and-processed meat products. This is a monthly publication of the Meat Industry Enhancement Strategy (MIES).

Global Influenza A (H1N1) outbreak

An outbreak of Influenza A (H1N1) originating in Mexico has infected people in 30 countries to date. The virus was also detected in a swine herd in Alberta. It is currently unknown how the animals became infected.

The virus, in the media often somewhat incorrectly referred to as "swine flu" is a new strain not previously detected in humans or animals. It combines genetic material from human, swine and avian influenza viruses.

Most cases outside of Mexico have been very mild, with more severe illness typically observed only in people with other underlying health issues. Unlike seasonal flu, the disease seems to affect children more than the elderly. The reason for this is unknown; one hypothesis is that exposure to some strains of seasonal flu virus may confer partial immunity. Older people would be more likely to have been exposed to virus in the past than children. However, influenza viruses are very unpredictable and change rapidly. It is unknown how the virus will develop in the future, and there is concern about what might happen when it encounters human seasonal flu or the H5N1 avian influenza virus.

Influenza is a respiratory illness, not a food borne disease. The Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO), the International Office of Animal Disease (OIE) and the World Health Organisation (WHO) have issued a joint statement confirming that humans are not known to become ill from eating properly prepared pork products - the virus is killed by normal cooking processes. Good hygienic practices when handling raw meat should always be observed. Nonetheless, some countries have banned pork imports from countries affected by the influenza outbreak, which may cause problems for the export-oriented pork industry.

Provincial election results

With the BC Liberals returning to government for a third term, we expect program directions as outlined in April by the Minister of Healthy Living and Sport to remain on track. Over the next few weeks there will likely be some changes in our reporting relationships with provincial ministries. In the meantime, we will continue to discuss and refine MIES and MTAP strategic priorities. Work will proceed on licensing transition, remote sites consultation, a new phase of MTAP, and advice regarding enforcement. MIES will also continue to work closely with the Ministry of Agriculture and Lands on slaughter waste solutions.

The Meat Transition Assistance Program's third phase will be developed in discussion with industry and will be finalized by the MTAP Steering Committee. Funds are still available under MTAP Phase 2, for slaughterhouses seeking licensing to provide custom kill services in targeted regions. See under the "What We Do" tab on the BCFPA web site, or call MTAP Coordinator Deborah Powell at 604.504.4409.

New abattoir association

The BC Abattoir Association was recently formed to represent the interests of licensed slaughterhouse operators. The MIES team wishes them success in their new endeavour and looks forward to working together on issues of joint interest. The BCFPA Board, in discussion with the Meat Processors Advisory Committee, is helping define optimal links between the different bodies.

Join BCFPA, increase our reach!

All meat processors continue to be welcome to join the BCFPA. Our broad membership allows us to gain a good understanding of the range of issues and needs and provide a strong, balanced industry voice to government.

For further information

Visit our Web site at www.bcfpa.ca/mies.html

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