

The Agricultural Operation Practices Act: New Rules, New Attitude

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■ Introduction

On July 4, 2001 the Alberta government announced plans to introduce legislation in the 2001 fall session of the Alberta Legislature to amend the Agricultural Operation Practices Act (AOPA) to include provincial responsibility for the siting of new and expanding confined feeding operations (CFOs) and to monitor and enforce provincial technical standards. Amendments also include provisions for a peer review process to deal with nuisance complaints from agricultural practices.

■ Definition of Confined Feeding Operations (CFOs)

Confined feeding operations are fenced or enclosed areas where livestock are confined for the purpose of growing, sustaining, finishing or breeding by means other than grazing. Seasonal feeding and bedding sites are not confined feeding operations. Grazing operations and seasonal feeding and bedding sites will not require an approval under AOPA.

■ Responsibilities and Roles of Governments and Agencies

The Natural Resources Conservation Board (NRCB) will assume responsibility for the siting, enforcement and monitoring of these operations on January 1, 2002. Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development is leading the development of the legislation, regulations and standards in consultation with

the NRCB, Alberta Environment, Alberta Municipal Affairs and Alberta Health & Wellness.

Regulations and standards are under development concurrent with the legislation. Amendments to AOPA as well as the regulations and standards are being based on three years of extensive public consultations. Amendments are based on and acknowledge the work previously completed by the Livestock Regulations Stakeholder Advisory Group (LRSAG) as well as the report from the Sustainable Management of the Livestock Industry in Alberta committee.

The regulations and standards will outline the provincial approval process for new and expanding CFOs. Proposals for larger operations will be required to apply through a formal approval process while applications for smaller operations will apply through a streamlined registration process. The regulations and standards will outline the science-based technical standards and procedures for approving CFOs along with ongoing monitoring and enforcement.

Municipalities will continue to play a vital role in the siting of CFOs. They will be encouraged to develop agricultural land-use plans and identify areas where CFO development would not be compatible with their current or future land uses. Municipal recommendations will be an important component in Natural Resources Conservation Board decisions for siting of new and expanding CFOs.

Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development (AAFRD) met with key stakeholders this fall to update them on the proposed amendments to AOPA and the regulations and standards. These groups were the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties, Alberta Urban Municipalities Association, Alberta Pork, Alberta Milk Producers, Alberta Cattle Commission, Alberta Cattle Feeders Association, Feather Industry Boards (Alberta Egg Producers, Alberta Hatching Egg Producers, Alberta Turkey Producers and the Alberta Chicken Producers), and the Regional Health Authorities.

AAFRD will continue to be responsible for amending AOPA, developing regulations and standards, as well as ensuring future updates are consistent with the needs of the livestock industry and the public. AAFRD will continue to provide research and technology transfer to the livestock industry.