

ALBERTA BEEF PRODUCERS
MINUTES FOR THE CATTLE FEEDER COUNCIL MEETING
WEDNESDAY JUNE 10, 2015, 8:30 A.M.
AT THE DELTA SOUTH HOTEL, EDMONTON, ALBERTA

Present: Howard Bekkering - *Chair*
Jimmy Nelson - *Zone 2*
Craig Ference - *Zone 4*
Charlie Christie - *Zone 5*
Cecil Anderson - *Zone 6*
Ken Stanley - *Zone 7*
Phil Amyotte - *Zone 8*
Tim Sekura - *BOD Rep*

Staff: Rich Smith - *Executive Director*
Karin Schmid - *Beef Production*

Absent: Garth Porteous - *Zone 1 at large*
Bryan Thiessen - *Zone 3*
John MacArthur - *Zone 9*

The Chair called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m.

1. Adoption of Agenda

(a) Adoption of Agenda:

Additions to agenda: 6(d) AMR Diagnostic Panel; 6(e) Lacombe Field Crops Centre Tour

Motion by Christie/Sekura:

“That the agenda be approved as amended.”

Carried

2. Approval of Minutes

(a) Minutes of the January 16, 2015 meeting:

Motion by Nelson/Stanley:

“That the minutes of the January 16, 2015 meeting be approved as presented.”

Carried

3. Financial Statement

(a) Financial Statements ending May 31, 2014:

The council reviewed the financial statement for the period ending May 31 2015 and found no unusual or noteworthy items. The only expense to date in this fiscal year is the ABP contribution to the Intensive Livestock Working Group (ILWG).

Motion by Sekura/Stanley:

“That the financial statement be accepted for information purposes only.”

Carried

As a matter arising from the financial statements, the council discussed industry funding and loss of funds due to service charge refunds. ABP is working with other industry organizations and the government to find solutions to this funding shortage, possibly involving some form of non-refundable levy or service charge.

4. Decision Items:

(a) Farm and ranch safety policy discussion:

A large group of agricultural commodity organizations, representing both the livestock and cropping sectors, will be meeting with the Ministers of Jobs, Skill, Training, & Labour and Agriculture & Forestry on June 29, 2015. Charlie Christie will be joining Roland Cailliau and Rich Smith as ABP representatives at the meeting. The purpose of the meeting will be to further discuss strategies for improving the health and safety of farm and ranch workers, including possible changes to labour legislation in Alberta. The agriculture industry recognizes that the new government will be under intense pressure to implement some level of legislative change, but we will be encouraging the government to proceed carefully with limited legislative changes supported by strong collaboration with industry organizations. The Council noted the industry concerns about the high potential for unfair and inconsistent enforcement if onerous labour regulations were applied to farms and ranches.

(b) Manure spreading on frozen or snow-covered ground:

The NRCB and Alberta Agriculture and Forestry are looking for industry input on the issue of manure spreading on frozen or snow-covered ground. The Agriculture Operation Practices Act (AOPA) does not allow operations with more than nine months of manure storage, which nearly all feedlots have in their pens, to apply manure on frozen or snow-covered ground unless authorization is received from an NRCB officer. The NRCB staff will generally authorize winter spreading in emergency situations, but are reluctant to authorize winter spreading on a routine or regular basis. A number of Alberta feedlots would like the ability to clean pens and spread manure during most winters and are seeking clarity from the NRCB on the process for receiving this authorization. A meeting will be held on June 23, 2015 and ABP has suggested that Greg Bowie, Stuart Thiessen, and Ken Stanley or Wayne Forbes attend the meeting, along with Rich Smith.

(c) Labour force issues:

The council discussed the continued challenge of finding enough workers for primary and secondary agricultural operations. The slowing of work in the energy sector has

reduced the strain on feedlots, but the processors are still facing significant labour shortages. Processors continue to lose opportunities for high value sales due to a lack of skilled labour and this encourages more movement of feeder and fed cattle to the U.S. Our industry needs substantive changes in Canada's immigration rules to allow more foreign workers into our industry. One positive change would be inclusion of industrial butchers in the express entry program.

(d) Taxation of intensive agricultural operations:

Changes to the Municipal Government Act were implemented, but changes to taxation of agricultural operations were delayed pending further discussion between municipalities and the agriculture industry. Ron Axelson of the Intensive Livestock Working Group (ILWG) is part of the Intensive Agriculture Operations Working Group (IAOWG) that is considering options for assessment and taxation of intensive agriculture operations and approaches for dealing with municipal infrastructure deficits. Stuart Thiessen is also part of the working group. While it may be argued that confined feeding operations (CFOs) should be assessed more municipal tax than agricultural cropland, we must ensure that CFOs do not bear the entire burden of resolving municipal tax and infrastructure deficits.

(e) Feedlot animal care assessment/VBP+:

The Alberta Cattle Feeders Association (ACFA) received substantial funding to have Dr. Joyce van Donkersgoed develop a Feedlot Animal Care Assessment. While ACFA is trying to have this assessment accepted as an industry standard, ABP is supporting the development of animal care, environment, and biosecurity modules under Verified Beef Production Plus (VBP+). In our view VBP+ should be the verification framework for the Canadian Roundtable for Sustainable Beef (CRSB). The McDonald's sustainability pilot uses animal care indicators based on the Code of Practice and we expect that VBP+ also will follow the Code.

(f) Hormone and antimicrobial issues:

The council discussed the growing pressure on our industry related to the use of growth enhancing and antimicrobial products. It is important for the industry to communicate with consumers and school children about the safety of these products and the careful use of them by producers. Karin Schmid discussed the Worried about Hormones brochure that ABP recently developed. This brochure has been very well received by the industry and has been accepted well at consumer events. The next brochure that ABP is developing will be Worried about Antimicrobial Use. These brochures are designed to provide information in a format that can be easily read and understood by consumers. They are an important part of overall industry communication efforts to maintain our ability to use the knowledge and technology that our research and development investments have provided.

5. In Camera

6. Discussion Items:

(a) Sustainability Project:

The council members had heard about the McDonald's sustainability pilot project during the general session of the Semi-AGM. When the pilot project ends in the spring of 2016, McDonald's intends to hand the sustainability assessment and verification process over to the CRSB. It will be important for the CRSB indicators to be consistent with the McDonald's indicators so processors will not be expected to segregate cattle for sustainability verification.

(b) BIXS:

The council discussed BIXS and the new company formed by the partnership with ViewTrak. The members questioned the benefits of BIXS and noted that many larger operations already have information sharing systems in place. There was not a lot of enthusiasm about BIXS and the council does not think that more industry time and money should be invested in the system.

(c) Harmony Beef:

Work is still progressing on preparations for the reopening of the Harmony Beef processing plant near Balzac, but the opening date has now been set back to early in 2016.

(d) AMR diagnostic panel:

Karin Schmid reported on the diagnostic panel project looking at antimicrobial resistance in animal health products that are commonly used on feedlots. The project has found relatively high levels of resistance to certain drugs, especially some product used to treat mycoplasma, but there are low levels of resistance to antimicrobial products that are important for human health.

(e) Lacombe Field Crops Centre Tour:

Karin Schmid also told the council that the report from Flavio Capettini on the Feed Grains Project is excellent. The large amount of ABP funding for this project will be completed at the end of this fiscal year and ABP will consider a further renewal of funding. The council discussed the possibility of combining a CFC meeting with a tour of the Field Crops Centre in Lacombe. The CFC toured the centre several years ago and the members found it worthwhile. This also would be an opportunity to meet Flavio.

7. Next Meeting and Upcoming Events

- (a) Council Meeting and Tour – August 18 or 20, 2015, Lacombe, AB

8. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned on a motion by Christie at 11:45 a.m.