



For immediate release:

New AFAC executive brings producer perspective to rapidly evolving welfare arena

Calgary, Alta., July 14, 2011: As a new world of farm animal care takes shape the board of Alberta Farm Animal Care (AFAC) has elected new executive officers to help lead the Alberta livestock industry into the future of this increasingly sophisticated and fast evolving area.

“The backbone of AFAC has always been its producer board members and the organizations they represent, who bring a hands-on perspective to the opportunities for progress in farm animal care,” says Lorna Baird, AFAC Executive Director. “That has never been more important than it is today. The new executive brings a depth of experience and dedication to farm animal care progress that is a major asset for our organization.”

AFAC is a partnership of Alberta's major livestock groups, with a mandate to promote responsible, humane animal care within the livestock industry. Its membership represents the broad diversity of the farm animal care community in the province. The new AFAC executive was selected by the 18 member AFAC Board at the 2011 Annual General Meeting.

Heini Hehli, a Rimby-area dairy producer, was elected AFAC Chair. Hehli represents Alberta Milk, where he has served as a delegate for more than 20 years. “Farm animal care, for my family and for me, is what our job is about as producers,” says Hehli of the 100 cow operation he runs with his wife, son and daughter-in-law. “As an industry, it’s an area where we always want to look for opportunities to strengthen our approaches.”

Communication is a critical component for the organization, he says. “We want to be very active in telling people about what we do, as the interest in farm animal care has never been higher for our customers and the public in general. AFAC has done good work over the years and we want to build on that progress.”

Larry Delver, Calgary-area based veterinarian and cattle producer, was elected AFAC Vice Chair. He represents Western Stock Growers, where he is 1st Vice President. Delver has also long been active with Alberta Beef Producers, where he is Cattle Industry Council Chair, and the Canadian Cattlemen’s Association. For 20 years Delver worked for the Health of Animals Branch of the Government of Canada, which became the Canadian Food Inspection Agency. He remains an active producer with 25 mother cows.

Rounding out the new members is Brian Chomlak, from Beauvallon, who represents Alberta Beef Producers and will serve as AFAC finance chair. Chomlak and family have a mixed farming operation with cattle and sheep. He has also served on the board of the Alberta Sheep and Wool Commission and has been active in several other industry organizations.

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Continuing on the executive is Past Chair of AFAC Doug Sawyer, who runs a cow calf and backgrounder operation in the Pine Lake area and represents Alberta Beef Producers. Sawyer was Chair of AFAC the past three years during which the organization celebrated milestones such as its 15th anniversary and the 10th AFAC-run Livestock Care Conference, its signature industry education and awareness event. Sawyer is also on the board of Red Deer Feeder's Association. He also has long had an interest in environmental stewardship issues and is Vice Chair of the Red Deer River Watershed Alliance.

With the new executive board in place, it will be roll-up-the-sleeves time for AFAC in the months ahead, says Baird. "We're in a time of lots of change and lots of opportunity. We're gearing up on several fronts to make sure the new world of farm animal care taking shape is one where Alberta livestock producers are leaders in capturing the opportunities that are emerging. The new executive will have a pivotal role in directing that progress." More information on AFAC is available at www.afac.ab.ca.

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