



For immediate release:

Leading speakers, topics highlight Livestock Care Conference agenda

Calgary, AB, March 3, 2010: Top speakers, latest developments and leading-edge topics are all part of the mix at the Livestock Care Conference, March 26 in Red Deer, hosted by Alberta Farm Animal Care (AFAC).

Themed “Managing challenges, producing opportunities,” livestock producers and industry representatives can still register for this event online at www.afac.ab.ca or by calling 403-932-8050. Early bird registration discounts are available before March 15.

“There is no doubt of the increasing focus on livestock care globally and its rising importance to the future success of livestock producers and their industries,” says AFAC Chair Doug Sawyer, who runs a cow calf and backgrounder operation in the Pine Lake, Alta., area. “At the conference, livestock producers can learn about where things are headed in livestock care and, perhaps most important, what this means for their operations and their industry.”

Leading off the conference agenda is Dr. Ed Pajor, a leading international animal care researcher who recently returned to Canada as professor of animal behavior and welfare at the University of Calgary. He shares his views on the fast-rising importance of livestock care not only to responsible management but to consumer acceptance and marketing success.

Next is Sam Hines of the Michigan Pork Producers Association, who discusses lessons that may be learned from the recent Michigan experience that saw animal agriculture interests unite around a new approach to animal care legislation. Rounding out the morning session is consultant Bruce Vincent on how to lead livestock care discussion by re-introducing the North American consumer to the people and processes of livestock production. This is followed by the presentation of AFAC’s Awards of Distinction to individuals showing livestock care leadership.

After lunch is a session on recent high profile case studies in livestock care management including Alberta’s Livestock Emergency Response Program, presented by R.C.M.P. livestock investigator Cpl. Dave Heaslip and Dr. Heather Willis of the Canadian Food Inspection Agency. This is followed with a presentation by Paul Hodgman of Alberta Pork, on how Alberta’s pork industry managed livestock care concerns and protected producers in the wake of the H1N1 crisis.

Next up is a showcase of progress in two key areas of research-based industry innovations to support improved livestock care, presented by livestock welfare specialist Jeff Hill of Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development and research associate Dr. Steve Mason of ProLivestock.

The afternoon session concludes with more snapshots of industry progress, including a round-up of early disease detection research, presented by Dr. Clover Bench of the University of Alberta, along with Dr. Nigel Cook and Dr. Al Schaefer of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada. Dawn Lawrence of the Horse Welfare Alliance of Canada closes the conference with a look at challenges facing the horse industry in Canada.

New AFAC Executive Director Lorna Baird will also attend the conference and take the opportunity to introduce herself and her approach. “Teamwork between industry, government and research is critical to our progress in livestock care,” says Baird. “The Livestock Care Conference is an excellent opportunity to strengthen our focus on the opportunities ahead.”

AFAC is a partnership of Alberta’s major livestock groups, with a mandate to promote responsible, humane animal care within the livestock industry. It has long hosted the Livestock Care Conference as a leading education and awareness event in support of ongoing knowledge and progress in this area.

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