



Cowichan Agricultural Society
5855 Clements Street
Duncan, BC
V9L 3W2

Dennis Lapierre - F.A.R.M. Community Council

13 January 2011

Re: Proposed Changes to the Animal Health Policy

Animal health questions are a major interest to farmers and the general public in the Cowichan Valley. Food security, soil and water management and agricultural sustainability are essential to the quality of life and economic outlook in the Cowichan Valley and throughout Vancouver Island.

This proposed policy revision appears to be primarily focussed on the economic implications for the high density export sector of the animal industry, and for interprovincial and international trade. As such, it neglects the primary issue of health and security of food for British Columbians. The policy is suggestive of trade offs in local health and animal disease management in favour of strengthening the confidence, i.e., preference, of Canada's trading partner interests. We cannot support a provincial government that does not put the security of food supply and the health of its citizenry first. Further, the proposed changes have the potential for substantially restricting animal management and thereby increasing the costs of smaller farm operations in favour of government authority, for example, through licensing and surveillance. The sustainability of communities in this province as well as the long term security of our food supply is increasingly recognized as being dependent on the viability of small and diverse mixed farms. It is unconscionable that agricultural and animal health policy for the 21st century in BC not recognize this reality

We want your assurance that following this initial round of public comment, and comment not consultation it is, there will be substantive consultation on the specific draft policy proposals. Better information is required to respond more thoroughly. Consistent with the theme of open government and accountability, drafters of the policy should hear the concerns and interests articulated by farmers and in the communities.

In short, consultation by online survey is not sufficient. Farmers need more information directly from those involved in the policy creation and an opportunity to ask questions of them in person on a repeated basis as the policy develops.

Given the importance of animal health in this Valley, and in anticipation of a more substantive consultation in the near future, we have urged the members of the Cowichan Agricultural Society to respond to your general questionnaire. We are also circulating copies of this letter to public officials identified below. I look forward to receiving your confirmation of a continued policy consultation.

Yours truly

John Milne
Acting President - Cowichan Agricultural Society

c.c. Ben Stewart – BC Minister of Agriculture, Linda Bates - BC Ministry of Agriculture Policy Branch, Lana Popham - MLA-Saanich South, Bill Routley - MLA-Cowichan Valley, Doug Roultey - MLA-Nanaimo-North Cowichan, Jean Crowder - MP-Nanaimo-Cowichan, Gerry Ritz – Federal Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Andy Dolberg - Chair BCAC, Dave Thomson - District A Farmers Institute