

LIVESTOCK BORDER CLOSURE CONTINGENCY PLAN

Deborah Stark
Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs
1 Stone Rd. West, Guelph, Ontario, N1G 4Y2
E-mail: deb.stark@ontario.ca

ABSTRACT

Many events could prevent Ontario from exporting livestock and livestock products (border closure). These include food safety issues, political/trade issues, disasters and pandemics. The most obvious, however, would be a foreign animal disease (FAD) outbreak in the province.

The closure of international borders to Canadian ruminants and ruminant products in response to the discovery of bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) in Alberta has cost the Ontario economy at least \$945 million². This has led to a real recognition of the vulnerability of the livestock sector to border closure threats.

The Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA) is developing an action plan to be implemented in the event that the border between Canada and the U.S., or another significant trading partner, is closed to the export of livestock and livestock products from Ontario. The goal of the plan is to help maintain infrastructure and maximize the sustainability of the pork and beef production and processing sectors during any disruption to border traffic.

The project has been divided into two stages. In stage one, the OMAFRA team analysed existing plans, and other information, to assess the potential impacts a border closure would have on the economy in Ontario and the livestock production and processing industries. The second stage is underway and involves developing strategies in cooperation with industry to mitigate the impacts.

STAGE ONE REPORT

A summary of the stage one report is available at:
www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/livestock/general/facts/borderclosuresum.htm

The OMAFRA team made several recommendations. They include the following:

² Statistics Canada, Agriculture Division. (2004). Canada's Beef cattle sector and the impact of BSE on farm family income. (2000-2003), Working Paper No. 69

General

1. A coordinated livestock border closure contingency plan should be developed and would be welcomed by industry.

Prevention

2. Explore options for the prevention of incidents that could cause the border to close. Prevention is the best solution to the potential problem.
3. Promote continued efforts towards improved provincial biosecurity. Consider the development of standard protocols and possible need for regulation.
4. Support the implementation of current and future traceability initiatives.
5. Examine the value of the West Hawk Lake Project and whether Ontario should make efforts to help move this and other potential zoning projects forward.
6. Encourage development of a strategy to develop biosecurity in non-regulated and non-commercial species including backyard flocks and other hobby farm animals.
7. Consider the expansion of training and programs for first responders involved in prevention, biosecurity and mass carcass disposal prior to a border closure.

Communication

8. Maintain communication and a co-operative working relationship with the National Pork and Beef Value Chain Roundtables as they develop plans to deal with a potential market collapse.
9. Investigate the necessary communication and information links with industry and other levels of government that would be needed to deal with a border closure situation.
10. Develop a communications and awareness strategy for the public for border closure issues.
11. Further develop and support direct relationships with U.S. states that import a large percentage of Ontario's livestock with the intent of working towards common trade goals with national authorities on both sides of the border.
12. Develop a communications and awareness strategy for industry (primary producers, processors and related service providers) for border closure issues.

Managing Surplus

13. Review the legislative authority needs of the province to enact orders and strategies for surplus animals in a border closure situation whether resulting from either a FAD or non FAD event.
14. Consider who will take the lead in a border closure incident caused by a non-FAD, as well as the individual responsibilities of both industry stakeholders and government.
15. Develop an action plan with industry to deal with orderly marketing in the event of a border closure.
16. Consider species specific plans for dealing with the impacts of a border closure.
17. Investigate options and strategies for managing surplus healthy animals.

18. Ensure that housing and feeding options for extending on-farm times and delaying marketing for various livestock commodities have been fully explored and documented, keeping in mind animal welfare considerations.
19. Investigate options for managing surplus meat products.
20. Investigate and document proper euthanasia methods for depopulating livestock farms.
21. Encourage completion of a mass carcass disposal options plan.

Processing

22. Investigate the potential limitations to increasing slaughter capacity within the province and whether these limitations can be mitigated.
23. Explore possible solutions to the limitations on additional capacity in the rendering sector particularly as it relates to weekend operation.
24. Consider options should processors or renderers find themselves inside a restricted movement zone in the event of a FAD.
25. Feed ingredients that are currently imported may have to be manufactured domestically. Evaluate whether these ingredients can be manufactured domestically, and if not, why not.

Support Programs

26. Investigate options for business continuity programs from farm through processing in order to help maintain the infrastructure and sustainability of Ontario's livestock sector through a border closure incident.
27. Identify potential financial support for the supply chain to assist in finding solutions to the impacts of a border closure.
28. Investigate the current availability and further need for support services that would help individuals and families through difficult circumstances (both financial and stress related).

Stage 2 of the project will be using these recommendations as the basis for developing a livestock border closure contingency plan.

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