



March 25, 2020

Devin Dreeshen, of Agriculture and Forestry
229 Legislature Building
10800 - 97 Avenue
Edmonton T5K 2B6

Dear Honourable Minister Dreeshen,

On behalf of the Alberta Cattle Feeders' Association and the Alberta Beef Producers, I am writing to offer some perspective on priorities for you and your government to consider as you develop your response to the current COVID-19 outbreak.

First and foremost, we would like to sincerely thank you and your colleagues, officials, and staff for the strong leadership you have shown with regards to managing the COVID-19 outbreak in our province, prioritizing the health of Alberta's citizens while working to ensure economic resilience.

Ensuring food security and safety is an area to be highly prioritized, and beef production plays an important role in this. Therefore it is of the utmost importance the Government of Alberta provide support and assurances that all aspects of the beef value chain will maintain business continuity.

In a stakeholder call held on Thursday, March 19, you gave assurances that the agriculture industry would be considered an essential service. The industry is looking for further clarity on this definition, and request that it be clearly communicated and implemented. There are concerns at all levels within Alberta's beef sector and reassurances that the Alberta government recognizes this sector as an essential service would provide much needed stability, and ensure business continuity.

Clarity would also useful for Alberta's health services sector. Their number one priority is to protect the health and safety of Alberta citizens by preventing the further spread of the virus. If employees and employers of essential services follow all the implemented measures to help prevent the spread of COVID-19, it is important that employees continue to provide their valuable services.



As an example, we have heard that several feedlot operations in Alberta are starting to see a shortage of workers and are getting concerned that they may not have enough employees available to ensure their animals are properly being cared for. They are taking all the appropriate measures to ensure the safety of their employees, but many employees are choosing not to return to work. And farm operators, as they are not officially deemed essential services, have no recourse to encourage employees to return.

Our members understand the top priority is the health and safety of their employees, but given issues with animal welfare, they are also concerned that their livestock be properly cared for.

Other sectors of the beef value chain are equally important to ensure business continuity in the beef sector, including cow-calf ranching, auction markets, livestock transportation, veterinarians, input suppliers, beef processing and retailing, and many more. Providing assurance that these sectors will be considered critical to food security will be important in the next few weeks; consistency of deemed essential services across all Canadian provinces will help avoid confusion and market disruptions.

There is also concern that these sectors have appropriate provisions required to operate safely, and along with other essential services, have access to necessary supplies such as hand sanitizers.

Working with our national beef partners, the Alberta beef industry would like to request your assistance provincially and federally, to ensure international trade corridors remain open, the CFIA's inspection capacity is maintained, and we are able to access temporary foreign workers.

The Alberta Cattle Feeders' Association, along with the Alberta Beef Producers, is working hard to ensure our members have the timely, clear, relevant information they need to protect both their employees, families and their animals. We appreciate your attention to these issues identified, to the hard work your government is doing to keep Albertans safe, and offer any assistance you may require. Please feel free to contact Janice Tranberg, President and CEO at 403-542-5830 or email at jtranberg@cattlefeeders.ca.

Yours sincerely,



Greg Schmidt, Board of Directors Chair
Alberta Cattle feeders' Association



Kelly Fraser, Chair
Alberta Beef Producers

CC: Deputy Minister Andre Tremblay