



House of Commons
CANADA

Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri- Food

AGRI • NUMBER 020 • 1st SESSION • 38th PARLIAMENT

EVIDENCE

Thursday, February 3, 2005

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Chair

Mr. Paul Steckle

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• (1530)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Paul Steckle (Huron—Bruce, Lib.)): Ladies and gentleman, we're going to call the meeting to order. Today, as your agenda will indicate, we've come together to look at the whole issue of animal health, as the presenters today are representing various components of our livestock industry, the Canadian Animal Health Coalition. We have with us five presenters.

We have Mr. Matt Taylor, Executive Director of the Animal Health Coalition; Jonathan Wort, Chair. We have with us Clare Schlegel, Chair of the Canadian Pork Council; and Gordon Dittberner, Executive Director, Canadian Veterinary Medical Association.

And Mr. Ron Wooddisse, President of the Ontario Cattlemen's Association, has just joined us. I believe that's still the title Ron holds.

Okay. We are ready to begin. Perhaps we could have your comments. How many presentations do we have? Three presentations? Could we keep that within a half hour? We'll share that in a half-hour period because of the number of questions we have for you today.

Mr. Wort, would you begin?

Mr. Jonathan Wort (Chair, Canadian Animal Health Coalition): First of all, I'd like to start by thanking the chair and the members of the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food for the opportunity to be here this afternoon. We appreciate your time. We feel what we have to say is important to agriculture in Canada.

Our purpose in being here today is to speak to you about the issues of animal health and in particular emergency management of animal health issues. We would like to see a comprehensive national animal health strategy developed. As part of that, we would like to see an animal health emergency management program. Specifically, we'd like to enlist your support in trying to further some emergency animal health programs and the development of broader animal health emergency planning.

We currently have a number of initiatives that we've applied for under the ACAAF system. We feel these are important, and they are part of an ongoing process that we initiated in 2000 to develop Canadian animal food industry emergency preparedness and our ability to respond to foreign animal disease issues in particular. The projects we are proposing or have on the go right now are for the next one to three years.

I'm going to do a brief introduction. Matt is going to follow me and explain the proposals that we have in front of ACAAF. Clare is then going to wrap up the whole presentation and give a broad overview.

What is the Animal Health Coalition? The Animal Health Coalition is a body that we brought together. It started initially in the year 2000, and we were legally constituted in 2002. We represent a broad range of animal health commodities, as you can see by the members who are with me today. There are many other stakeholders, as well as major industry partners and processors, and veterinary professionals in the provinces, including their veterinary infrastructures and the veterinary colleges.

Our mandate is to promote a collaborative approach to animal health in Canada. We don't deliver policies or programs as such. Our intent is to try to develop a broader strategy and approach to animal health issues and to try to encourage the development of these programs.

In 2002, as part of a project, we started to look at foreign animal disease simulation. We did a tripartite exercise on foot-and-mouth disease. The recommendations that came out of that led us down this road.

We've been involved in trying to develop greater veterinary lab infrastructure and encourage that process. We led a joint industry-government foot-and-mouth disease mission to the U.K. in 2002 in the aftermath of the experience they had there. We co-hosted, with the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, a foot-and-mouth disease forum here in Ottawa in 2002. We prepared a major document that was an economic impact assessment of the potential effect of a foot-and-mouth disease outbreak in Canada in 2002, and that has been a very significant document. It has actually been the backbone of a lot of the economic assessments related to BSE that have been done.

We started in what we call the CAHEM projects—the Canadian animal health emergency management projects—in 2002, beginning with a strategic planning phase in which we looked at a number of issues and identified our priorities. That's where we are now. We're now into the third stage of that phase.

• (1535)

As a result of the BSE outbreak in 2003, we revisited the whole issue of economic impact assessments. We did one for BSE, which I think has been quite highly quoted, and in 2002 we led a mission to Europe to look at zoning, particularly in Holland; that was a joint government-industry mission.

In 2003-04 we completed the CAHEM II projects, which included one on zoning. We looked at policy development issues and we developed emergency management and communication plans, generic plans that are available to industry. This was really the design and development phase for the CAHEM III project, which is what we are proposing right now in terms of actually developing infrastructure in the industry and delivering it to industry.

Currently in Canada our animal food industry is the fourth largest exporter of meat and related products in the world. We're the ninth largest sector in export in Canada, as you're probably well aware, after petroleum and before pulp and paper and plastics. We're one of the largest employers in Canada, and we believe that something like one in three jobs in Canada can be related to agriculture.

We were recently recognized by Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness Canada as part of their national critical infrastructure in Canada. This was actually a bit of a challenge. People didn't seem to recognize food as being critical to the infrastructure in Canada, but I think we've made that point successfully now.

Canada's experience with AI—avian influenza—and BSE over the past two years has clearly demonstrated the significance of disease outbreaks in Canada. We estimate that a minimum of \$6 billion has been lost as a result of the BSE event in Canada, and certainly the experience with AI and BSE and the widespread depopulation of animals have clearly demonstrated the importance of our industry's being able to respond effectively with our government partners and other industry partners to this kind of issue.

As members of the coalition, we would like to acknowledge and recognize the efforts of those in both government and industry who work together, particularly for what they did in the AI outbreak. It's important to remember that these two events, BSE and AI, are from our industry's perspective by far the biggest thing that's happened in the past 50 years in terms of an emergency issue. It's been over 50 years since we had a foot-and-mouth disease outbreak in this country, and we were very clearly sensitized when the problems occurred in the U.K. At this point in time our industry is very interested in proceeding with these kinds of initiatives because we recognize the importance of being able to respond effectively in the event of a problem.

I think there are some lessons we can take away from the BSE and the AI events in the last couple of years. First of all, as an industry, we realize we are better prepared than we thought we were. That being said, we're not nearly where we should be, and we would really like to be able to get to a better position. Industry, along with government, must have in place broad policy responses and mechanisms for an all-hazard approach to foreign animal disease prior to the next crisis we have to face—and we know we will have to face a crisis at some point in time in the future.

We've clearly seen in the last two years with the BSE problem that emergency health events in livestock have a much broader effect than just on the commodity that's impacted by the issue.

● (1540)

BSE obviously is not just a beef cattle industry issue. It's dairy cattle. It affects the pork sector. It has affected the genetics sector. It

has affected truckers. It has affected veterinarians. It has had a very wide-ranging impact on our whole industry in Canada.

One of the things we recognize very clearly is that there's no inclusive forum that we can use to debrief on past outbreaks and plan for future outbreaks. We'd like to see something developed around that.

We also recognize that there are really inadequate resources to address the possibility of multiple or large-scale outbreaks in the future. We also recognize that there are possibilities of animal diseases posing a larger public health risk.

A number of known policy issues have yet to be adequately addressed. One of the things we're concerned about is the issue of mass depopulation or alternate use of animals that may have to be disposed of. We feel that we need to address issues related to financial risk management tools, and also emergency management and communication capability within industry that would allow us to better communicate with our government partners and first response agencies. We need to develop more appropriate biosecurity practices that are commodity-specific. In concert, or together, we have to develop all these issues and look at research as well.

The role of animal health in the larger public system remains unclear, and leadership in the event of a zoonotic outbreak has not been clarified in Canada. Canada's last four major public health issues have had an animal host, and all the world's major epidemics over the past decade are similar to that.

According to the WHO, 75% of emerging human diseases have an animal base or background. Seven of the eleven diseases recognized or reported in the Naylor report on SARS have an intermediate or animal host.

BSE and AI have been devastating to agriculture in the last couple of years, but there are other hazards that we recognize, particularly foot-and-mouth disease, but other foreign animal diseases that could have a much greater impact on our industry and the economy of the country. Our economic impact assessment of foot-and-mouth disease indicated that a small outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease could cost our country \$13 billion, and depending on how we were able to react, it might cost us as much as \$45 billion.

There are other hazards that we haven't even considered, or we are considering, or we recognize. An example would be a widespread feed contamination issue such as the one that happened in Belgium, where dioxin got into the food chain and there was a huge recall of products from around the world. Then we have the issue of emerging or unknown diseases, like Nipah virus and its outbreak in pigs, which may be transferable to humans.

Future strategies that we must take into consideration are the likelihood or the possibility of outbreaks of highly contagious disease in the Canadian animal food industry. We need to be able to respond effectively to these issues.

The potential impact of an outbreak could be far bigger than what we've ever seen. It's not just our animal food industry that will be impacted; it will be our economy as a whole. We need to be able to effectively operate our industry and respond with both government and other industry partners on these issues.

That's why we're interested in being here today and talking to you about the six projects that we have on the go. I'm going to turn it over to my colleague Matt to explain to you what we have in the plan.

• (1545)

The Chair: Mr. Taylor.

Mr. Matt Taylor (Executive Director, Canadian Animal Health Coalition): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

My purpose today is to briefly describe for you six animal health and emergency management projects that we've submitted from the coalition to Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada and as well to Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness Canada's funding programs.

The economic analysis we've done has already demonstrated that effective control measures, which we defined as including effective zoning, have the capability of reducing the potential impacts of a major disease outbreak by some 45%. In the case of an FMD outbreak, that could be saving somewhere up to \$22 billion off a total somewhere between \$25 billion to \$45 billion. These savings can only be achieved if the work is done in advance and if our stakeholders and our trading partners develop an ongoing day-to-day familiarity with the workings of the emergency management tools that we develop now.

The coalition's proposals are as follows. We've submitted to Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada four projects under the CAHEM initiative, which would really be in the implementation phase. These are: zoning; emergency management and communication plans and their implementation and rollout throughout the industry; policy recommendations and fostering, from an industry perspective, of a national animal health strategy; and biosecurity standards, commodity specific and recognizing the differences between different commodity sectors but throughout the industry as a whole for both normal steady state, elevated, and high levels of risk. Also being submitted to Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada is a proposal to prepare a discussion paper that identifies financial risk management tools and recommendations. And last, submitted to Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness is a proposal to prepare a vulnerability assessment template that would be applied sector by sector throughout the food animal industry.

These are detailed on two pages in a brief that we have provided. Unfortunately, we were unable to get it translated. You should have it within a day or two.

What we want to emphasize to you is the importance of the CAHEM III projects: zoning; emergency management plans; policy recommendations; and biosecurity. We've already gone through the strategy phase and we've gone through the discussion paper and consultation phase, which were funded—and we sincerely appreciate that—by Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada over the past three years. What we want to do is get value out of what we've done, and we want to implement that over the next year or two.

Approval of these projects can lead to significantly reduced impacts. The estimated cost of these projects is some \$3.5 million over three years. That is a significant figure, but it's not a large sum relative to the industry as a whole, and it's not a large sum relative to the scope of impacts or the savings that we can reasonably expect from a major outbreak if we already have them in place. These projects that we've put forward are by no means a complete list of the actions that should be undertaken by all stakeholders. They do represent, though, the more general and more pressing initiatives and the ones that can be applied across the industry as a whole, as we've identified in our discussions at our board level and with our members, which include, as Jonathan indicated, the full range of the industry.

Other initiatives and investment are also required in the area of infrastructure: level III labs at colleges; a federal-provincial university laboratory surveillance network; disposal or alternate use facilities, FAD training to develop the human resource capability so that we actually have a surge capacity; and disease-specific research.

As well, there are a number of sector-specific initiatives under way. You've had discussions with the poultry sector and I believe also with the bovine sector in terms of upgrading traceability and their own containment strategies.

The deliverables that we think we can get out of the six projects we put forward are, one, the ability to zone. At present we don't have a formally recognized zoning program. What this would give us is a two-zone system, which sounds pretty basic, and it is, but it's something that we could then copy or apply at five or six other locations throughout the country where there are similar effective geographical and environmental barriers to the spread of disease.

• (1550)

Second, we would develop a defined emergency management and communications capability within the industry so that it can better partner with that of government first-response agencies in real and simulated emergencies.

Third is a policy that is capable of supporting the industry, both the export-dependent and the domestically focused sectors, in light of the increasingly global nature of disease and its spread.

Fourth is the basis of a national biosecurity program, which would be developed independently within the different commodity sectors but would address common standards necessary for normal, elevated, and high levels of risk, and would enable producers to do the actions on-farm that will minimize the spread of disease should it actually get inside the country and manifest itself within the industry.

Fifth is a range of financial risk-management tools, many of which are already available in other industries and which can be transplanted from those industries into our food animal industry and which would complement existing tools such as the compensation provisions of the Health of Animals Act, the CAIS program, etc., which at present address, by our estimates, 10%, 15%, and perhaps 20% of the total impact. There is an opportunity to bring in other tools that would have the ability to lessen the impact of the other 75% of the total impact.

Last is a vulnerability assessment template for use in different sectors within the food animal industry and in accordance with Canada's obligations under the smart border action plan.

Now I'm going to turn it over to one of my directors, Clare Schlegel, the president of the Canadian Pork Council.

The Chair: Mr. Schlegel.

Mr. Clare Schlegel (Chair, Canadian Pork Council, Canadian Animal Health Coalition): Thank you, Mr. Steckle.

To conclude, we want to suggest a way forward. Acknowledging first that we cannot afford to cherry-pick, but rather we want a logical approach, and that we cannot look at any single approach to safeguard our industry, as a general recommendation we must immediately adopt a collaborative, convergent, and multi-pronged approach that recognizes both the cross-commodity nature of animal health emergencies and the independence of different sectors, and implements a strong array of practical and effective emergency management tools for use within an overarching animal health strategy. That's important—an overarching animal health strategy. With this in mind we recommend the following.

All the players must place increased priority on animal health and emergency management, backing this up with additional and significant investment. I can speak on behalf of the pork industry that because of BSE, AI, and foot-and-mouth disease in the U.K., Japan, and Taiwan, we're very well aware of the risk that disease poses to our industry.

Stakeholders must have direct involvement in the development and championing of a broad strategic direction as set out in the evolving national animal health strategy currently being developed by CFIA. We believe it needs to be a joint effort between government and industry. Either party cannot achieve it alone.

A joint industry-government animal health emergency management program must be positioned within that strategy, perhaps constituted as a formal partnership alongside of and complementing other important and necessary program elements such as identification and traceability surveillance, etc. We had commented earlier in our brief that we're further ahead than we were a few years ago, but we're not where we need to be yet, certainly, in many of these components.

Necessary tools for managing an animal health emergency—tools that in many cases are necessary for industry to be a truly effective partner in emergency management—must be fast-tracked and given the financial support they require from Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada. I would only speak from a business perspective that I understand it takes longer when we're working at either a provincial or a national level, but it's extremely frustrating when we recognize

the risk we face, and it takes us so long to actually respond collectively together.

The sector-specific initiatives already advanced—for example, the containment and biosecurity initiatives advanced by the poultry sector, and I can also speak about, for instance, identification and traceability in the cattle sector—are what we're currently doing in the hog sector. Other specific initiatives noted as being necessary are, for example, to clarify leadership and decision-making between federal animal health and public health authorities for serious cyanotic diseases, investment in infrastructure, investment in integrated public animal wildlife surveillance systems and training, such that our human resources have the surge capacity required in the event of a disease outbreak. Of course we would also be encouraging the six coalition projects specifically that we talked about earlier.

With BSE and AI, to varying degrees, behind us and before—a lot of people say before, and it's not if but when—new crises have taken their place, we do have a window of opportunity now to start a process over the next 6 to 12 months that ensures Canada's animal food industry will continue to develop in a truly sustainable manner that takes into account the inevitability of animal health emergencies.

For Canada's food animal industry to be sustainable as a world leader—and we are a world leader—we must become also, or at least continue to be, a world leader in animal health. It's in fact because of our high animal health status that we have access to many of the markets around the world.

We look for your support for the implementation of a national animal health strategy and ask that you communicate your support directly to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food for the funding of the emergency management tools to be developed by the CAHEM III projects we have described so as to contribute to the long-term sustainability of Canada's food animal industry.

Thank you for taking the time to hear our suggestions and listen to us.

• (1555)

The Chair: Thank you very much for your presentation, and you are four minutes under your time, so we have four minutes longer to question you. We will begin our line of questioning with Mr. Bezan from the Conservative Party.

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I want to thank the coalition for coming in and giving us such a good presentation—a well thought out strategy.

I would suggest that the \$3.5 million you're talking about to protect the animal agriculture industry in this country is a very small investment by any means, especially when you map it out over three years. I think it would be shameful if we didn't take a hard look at this and provide our support in backing you up.

You were talking about the foot-and-mouth disease potential, and we know that can be the biggest problem we face with known diseases today, especially because it can go across species of animals. You're talking about a \$13 billion to \$45 billion cost. Is that all government or all industry? What's the sharing there to arrive at that number, and also the savings you talked about by going to zoning?

Mr. Matt Taylor: First, the report was released I think in November 2003, and we'd be happy to provide you with a detailed executive summary if you'd like to have it researched.

That included costs borne directly by the farm sector, and their indirect costs; those borne by the processors; the wins or losses at the consumer level; and the trade losses. The costs are high, and probably at first blush you'd think that was absolutely impossible, but the costs are primarily wrapped up in the lost market opportunities from being out of the market for a given period of time, and then the time required to gain back the share that those other countries took from you.

Mr. James Bezan: It's similar to what we're going through right now with BSE in the ruminant industry.

Mr. Matt Taylor: I guess the only difference is that with FMD you're directly impacting hogs, dairy, and beef. So the protein crash in the market would have a significant impact on basically all protein markets within the country.

Mr. James Bezan: Sure.

You were talking about leadership in this—that there has to be somebody to take on the leadership role with the government-industry collaboration. Who do you see that being on the leadership side?

• (1600)

Mr. Matt Taylor: I think the principal leadership lies with Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada.

Mr. James Bezan: So you have been talking with the minister and CFIA. How have those discussions been going?

Mr. Matt Taylor: We have sent letters and are waiting for a reply. We would welcome the opportunity to meet with the minister.

Mr. James Bezan: How long have you been waiting for a reply from the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food?

Mr. David Taylor: Clare, do you want to take this one?

Mr. Clare Schlegel: There are a number of pieces that are being put together, and premise identification is one of the basic building blocks—knowing where the animals are. In a lot of ways, certain components are pretty simple. We understand that Dr. Brian Evans is leading a move toward an animal health strategy. We're encouraging that to be shared with the industry, and even industry having input into that process, as opposed to simply having a federal-provincial-territorial discussion.

Industry has a lot to lose in this process. We are definitely further along the path, but we don't have a clear understanding of a strategy or a plan that we can all follow at this point.

Mr. James Bezan: So there hasn't been a lot of consultation at all. Is that what you are saying?

I am a farmer and used to attend the occasional national animal health consultation committee, which was industry and government meeting together. Does that still take place on an annual basis?

Mr. Clare Schlegel: Yes.

Mr. James Bezan: But outside of that, there isn't any other discussion.

Mr. Matt Taylor: Not yet. We have agreement with Dr. Evans to meet in the near future on the national animal health strategy. We have had the department's support in developing the CAHEM initiatives. We believe it could have gone faster, but the industry has been faced with BSE and AI, and I think that has really taken the focus of the department, rather than these longer-term things, which are important but probably less urgent.

Mr. James Bezan: That should be the reason why we need to move a lot quicker. We don't need to go through this again and have the same problems, especially if there are huge savings with such little investment.

You are talking about zoning as one of the six initiatives. Can you maybe go into a little more detail as to how you see that breaking out? You were only talking about two zones when you mentioned that.

Mr. Matt Taylor: The proposal we're putting forward is the ability to develop, within Canada, a zoning capability based on geographic and environmental barriers. Those are perhaps the most effective barriers to disease.

Within Canada we have probably five, perhaps seven, potential zoning barriers that are based on geography and environmental barriers. The most obvious and clearly recognizable one is between Manitoba and Ontario, where there is really only one road and two rail lines. That's where we're proposing to implement the first point, but whatever we learn there can be applied in probably five other locations. We would expect that those would be subsequent initiatives, but we have to start somewhere.

The reality is, in the Netherlands they have something like 17 zones. In the U.S. they recognize zoning on their state level because they track movement between states.

Most of the world knows that while we have a fairly proficient veterinary infrastructure, we are one zone and you can move stock from one side of the country to the other without paper or without documentation. We're making steps in that direction with ID and traceability, but basic zoning as defined by the OIE and as recognized by most countries in the world, including our primary trading partner, is something we can do right away.

The Chair: You have a very short time.

Mr. James Bezan: On the vulnerability assessment template, how is that different from the current risk assessment process we're using today?

Mr. Matt Taylor: What a vulnerability assessment does is it takes an industry and it looks at the key hazards. If those hazards impact the industry, what are the ripple effects elsewhere in the economy, or elsewhere in society, or in other industries that would be impacted if that first industry went down, and what are the potential remedies that can be implemented to address that initial hazard?

The Chair: Ms. Rivard, do you want to take the first round of questions? You have seven minutes.

•(1605)

[Translation]

Ms. Denise Poirier-Rivard (Châteauguay—Saint-Constant, BQ): You said that one in three jobs in Canada can be related to agriculture. This proves agriculture is a very important sector of the economy that should be closely monitored and where we should be ready to intervene in case of an outbreak.

You're talking about zoning in case of a disease outbreak. First, what benefits could be derived from zoning in case of a major disease? Second, what impediments, both domestic and international, would there be to such a proposition? You mentioned business legislation as an example.

[English]

Mr. Matt Taylor: The concept of zoning is defined internationally by the World Organisation for Animal Health, the OIE. Those guidelines have been taken by our trading partners, such as the U.S., and they have published standards by which they will accept another country's application to have them recognize zoning. It would enable us to get back into those foreign markets faster. I think that addresses the second half of your question.

With respect to the role that zoning might play with respect to public health risks, if we're dealing with a zoonotic, zoning would enable us to get on to the premises sooner on that portion of the country that we believe to be clean of the disease. So we would know right on day one of having a suspect case what premises had received stock, or product or equipment within, say, the last 30 days from the other side. We would be able to have CFIA there and the premises quarantined or watched to determine whether or not that was indeed infected, and if it were, to act on it right away. We wouldn't have to look for them and wait for them to manifest themselves.

I am not sure if that answers your question.

[Translation]

Ms. Denise Poirier-Rivard: Yes, this would have been helpful in the case of BSE.

[English]

Mr. Matt Taylor: To be fair, I don't believe any country has satisfactorily applied zoning for BSE, but BSE is not really the traditional highly contagious disease outbreak. The degree of contagion is not well understood. At best, it is a low contagious disease. It is a trade disease, however. I am not certain that zoning would be a particularly useful tool for BSE.

It is, however, a highly effective and highly recognized tool for most of the diseases that we're more familiar with and that may be a risk to both public health and animal health.

[Translation]

Ms. Denise Poirier-Rivard: Traceability is now one of the major issues of food production from the farm to the consumer table. Should Canada invest in a national state-of-the-art traceability system? This is an area, among others, where Quebec has shown leadership. Should it be a model for the rest of Canada?

[English]

Mr. Clare Schlegel: I think ATQ and CCIA have both been leaders. I think they've both served us well, and today, in terms of BSE recovery, you can see that Canada is one step ahead of the United States.

I'd like to say thank you to Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada because they've contributed dollars to the creation of the Canadian Cattle Identification Agency, which hopes to house a premise registry system on any farm across Canada that has animals.

In the swine sector, you've supported a pilot study where we're looking at identifiers and a swine traceability system, and I think within six months we'll have a proposed swine traceability system for this great country of ours, supported by public and private dollars.

In the case of Quebec, we have Le Porc du Québec and ATQ working with us to make sure the system is completely harmonized and that it will be a state-of-the-art world leader.

We're going to get there. It's taking awhile. The zoning issue we can do quickly, because in a full traceability system we could have very small zones, but we're years and years away before we'll know the movement of all the livestock across Canada.

•(1610)

[Translation]

Ms. Denise Poirier-Rivard: Thank You.

[English]

The Chair: Mrs. Ur.

Mrs. Rose-Marie Ur (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, Lib.): I'd like to thank you for the presentations. It's a great time for you to visit our committee. We had the opportunity to visit Abbotsford a few weeks ago, so some of the questions I'll be asking today will fit in with that visit, which I thought was very productive.

While we were there, more often than not we heard about the lack of communications during the avian flu outbreak. You said one of the things you wanted to look at through your Canadian animal health emergency strategy was a communications awareness campaign. Can you tell me what you're going to do to try to help resolve the lack of communications that people felt were very evident when that outbreak took place?

What is your strategy there?

Mr. Matt Taylor: I think one of the primary things we can do in a positive way is to develop plans within our own industry. I think one of the principal difficulties is there's not a clear understanding of how the incident is being managed. So a clear understanding of who is doing what, both within government and within industry.... And I think that comes from the development of plans and from the testing of those plans in simulations, starting out just within your own commodity, and in time doing it jointly with government.

In the U.S. they have moved to something called the incident command system. It's basically an org chart, if you will, so you know who to go to. I think one of the real challenges in a highly contagious outbreak where things are moving fast—and all the activity that occurred with BSE is maybe scrunched into six weeks—is to know who you go to in order to influence when a decision is being made or to express a concern about how a decision is being made. That's where the incident command system comes into play.

We understand that PSEPC has adopted a more or less incident command system. All the provinces, I think, have now moved toward an incident command system. In the U.S. they've started training their industry leaders in the incident command system, and we see that as part of our emergency management planning project.

Mrs. Rose-Marie Ur: One of the concerns or complaints we heard there as well was the fact that CFIA seemed to have their cluster of people there.

Were you involved when that outbreak took place, or did you have any play in the situation?

Mr. Matt Taylor: We're more of a backroom group. We're looking at trying to develop the tools before it happens, so they can be used by our members when it does happen.

Mrs. Rose-Marie Ur: Were you aware of the way the depopulation took place at Abbotsford?

Mr. Matt Taylor: Indirectly, yes.

Mrs. Rose-Marie Ur: What's your summation of that?

Mr. Matt Taylor: I think the individuals there did the best they could at the time. The critical thing is you have to make decisions and they have to be carried out. What's important, I think, to this country is that we get a plan for the next time around. If we do have to depopulate a bunch of animals, how are we going to do it with maximum support and minimum concerns?

Mrs. Rose-Marie Ur: There was a suggestion there in our discussions about CFIA—and I certainly have a lot of respect for CFIA for what it's gone through in the last little while—that CFIA is more a policy group. I never looked at it that way. And then I suggested perhaps we need to have a DART team. We should have CFIA for sure, but then have a DART team ready to be deployed in different regions when different disasters happen. I know I'm being very simplistic in my statement, but I thought then the two could work together, and I think that would certainly improve reactions. Maybe our honourable veterinarian would like to speak to that.

Dr. Gordon Dittberner (Executive Director, Canadian Veterinary Medical Association, Canadian Animal Health Coalition): Yes, I would. I would like to comment a little from the veterinarians' perspective. Many of them felt we were not all included from the word go. I think that's part of what we would see with a future animal health strategy, that we have clearly defined roles, and when you have an outbreak, you have immediate engagement of all the sectors. I don't mean just the veterinary profession, but that certainly would have been one of them. We should have had more involvement by the provincial laboratory capability that should have been in on the decision-making process very early.

I think by having those sorts of instruments in place as part of our strategy, we would address many of the communication problems that arose in that particular instance.

• (1615)

Mrs. Rose-Marie Ur: Speaking about the provincial laboratories, it was also mentioned that considering the time it took for tests to be done and to be shipped to Winnipeg, perhaps there should be some kind of venue there to look at more laboratories, federally run laboratories as well as the provincial ones, to reduce times for testing. Is that feasible?

Dr. Gordon Dittberner: I should answer, first of all, that I don't have the details of the analysis from both sides, so it's perhaps a little unfair for the coalition to comment. But in general we're saying much the same sort of thing, which is that we need to be working together to have the details outlined in the beginning. We need to have protocols between the laboratories, federal and provincial, to make sure these kinds of arrangements can be accepted and implemented from the moment of the first disease diagnosis or first disease suspect.

I think there hasn't been enough recognition of the capabilities of the respective players, and we need to work on that to make sure it is addressed for the future. Whether the timing could have been less or more—I'm inclined to think if the reports are true it is unreasonably long, but I don't have the details so I can't really comment specifically.

Mrs. Rose-Marie Ur: I thought if they were in communities, that would save time going from wherever to Winnipeg.

Another issue someone spoke about this afternoon is contamination of feed. My question is, do you see a better process than rendering to eliminate contamination or possible contamination? Is there a better system out there than rendering for disposal?

Dr. Gordon Dittberner: I think this is one of the things we've recommended: the need for better disposal facilities for carcasses, whether they be poultry or whatever. We certainly find that composting has been a very useful mechanism in some circumstances, but it may not be appropriate for all.

Every disease is going to be different. Every situation is going to be different, but I think we recognize, both from a policy point of view and from a scientific point of view, that we need to do a lot of work and we need to be doing it together.

The Chair: Your time has expired. We will go to Mr. Miller for five minutes.

Mr. Larry Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Mr. Chairman, I'd also like to thank the presenters today and Mr. Wooddisse for coming and for the presentation.

During the hearings on the BSE crisis, this committee heard from a number of groups. There's been talk of an amendment to the national meat code, because obviously the slaughter capacity was a big issue and this thing continues to be. And the talk is of having an interprovincial process in place where some of this could be killed at provincial plants.

I just wonder if you have any views on that and if you could share them with us.

Mr. Matt Taylor: We work based on the direction given by our members. We really haven't been directed to address the issue of the meat inspection and allocation between provincial and federal authorities. We really haven't considered those.

Mr. Larry Miller: I understand that, but I think we have some problems here. I would hope maybe you people would have a better line on some of those problems and how they could be overcome. That's one of the reasons why I asked that question.

Mr. Clare Schlegel: Let me make one comment. I think our focus clearly is on the future and on asking what the minimum tools are that could be put in place to reduce the risk and speed up any recovery if an infectious disease should hit Canada. There are some basic tools: emergency management plans that are coordinated between industry and government; zoning; and a good ID and traceability system. And there would be several others. We can't stress prevention enough. You have a number of issues that Gordon would love to talk to, I'm sure. So we don't see meat inspection necessarily affecting our preparedness for a potential foreign animal disease.

• (1620)

Mr. Larry Miller: I obviously disagree on that one, but anyway...

Mr. Dittberner.

Dr. Gordon Dittberner: I just want to clarify something a little bit.

In terms of federal and provincial slaughter plants, the difference really depends on the export of that product. If the meat is going to be exported out of the province, it is required to be federally inspected. Since 95% of the carcasses in Canada are slaughtered in federal plants, that provides us with a very small group there. If the product was going to be confined and used exclusively within a province, that could be done.

Mr. Larry Miller: Maybe I didn't explain it properly. Some plants in some provinces, provincial plants, are very close to the standards of federal ones. Those were the ones I guess I was pointing at.

The Chair: Ron.

Mr. Ron Wooddisse (Canadian Cattlemen's Association, Canadian Animal Health Coalition): I understand what you're talking about, and I think we do in our area. The beef industry certainly would like to see a harmonization of the rules so that we at least have provincial plants that can slaughter for interprovincial trade, not necessarily for export out to the world. But there are quite a few provinces that are not even up to the standard that we have in Ontario, and they would have to be brought up to that standard.

But again, what we have presented here from the Animal Health Coalition is a different perspective. We're looking at an emergency plan. In our industry, likely the biggest thing we learned from BSE is just how big that ripple effect is. We're talking about the chances of a huge tidal wave—not just a ripple, but a tidal wave—so how do we get in front of this? Those are problems we need to work out, absolutely. That's a major problem, as are slaughter capacity and provincial inspection. But besides that, let's worry about how we get ahead of this tidal wave that might hit us.

Mr. Larry Miller: In the event of a decision on major depopulation or what have you, obviously carcass disposal would

be a big issue and a joint effort. Are we well prepared for something like that, or should a plan be developed for the long term?

Mr. Matt Taylor: In a sense, that's what some of our work under the policy project is directed towards. Some work has been done, but a significant amount of work needs to be done still. Clearly, it's the last resort place that we want to be going to, but we'd like to have that work done in advance so that industry and government are doing it together without trying to figure it out as we go.

Mr. Larry Miller: Okay.

The Chair: You have slightly more time if you want more.

Mr. Larry Miller: I think that's it.

The Chair: You're satisfied.

Mr. Drouin, for five minutes.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Claude Drouin (Beauce, Lib.): Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

I want to thank our witnesses for their presentations.

Some people suggested slaughtering all animals at risk, in the case of BSE for instance, so as to eliminate all risks and then to allow reopening of the borders and a return to the situation we had previously. I would like to have your views on that. Instead of implementing costly programs to support the industry, wouldn't it be better for governments to compensate farmers for their losses following a mass slaughter that would be done in order to eliminate all risks of disease and give people a sense of security?

[*English*]

Mr. Ron Wooddisse: As far as the safeguard to the population with our SRM removal, specific risk material removal at slaughter, we are slaughtering all the cattle that could have the disease as if they were totally infected and we're taking out that infected material.

The problem with trying to do a mass slaughter of the older animals at this particular time is that they're all basically healthy, except for those very few we can identify that are finally at the end of the disease. Therefore, we would have to slaughter them, but I would estimate that 95% or 98% of the cattle would be perfectly healthy, and we would only be slaughtering them because of age.

We would have a logistical problem. We would have a problem of identifying by age right now because we don't have an age and we do it by teeth. It's not very effective. We'd have a problem of what we would do with either the meat or the carcasses.

I would say that it would be a very hard position to be put into. It may have been a position that we could have had in July 2003, but certainly I don't see how it's possible to do it at this time. Nor is there public health safety because it's not a communicable disease and it's not a contagious disease. Therefore, I believe we're likely on the right path now.

•(1625)

[Translation]

Hon. Claude Drouin: Thank you. This is not a solution. It could have been useful in a sense but we would kill a huge number of healthy animals, which would be extremely costly. And then it would have an impact on producers because they would have less animals to use for production.

[English]

Mr. Ron Wooddisse: It's possible. But if the border reopens and those cattle are still in the system, they will still derive value because we can export that product. In the way it's set right now, after March 7 we will be able to export product from those over-30-month animals into the U.S. and into another 50 countries in which we are right now. We will have value received eventually from some of the cattle we're still holding.

[Translation]

Hon. Claude Drouin: Mr. Wort, you said that 75% of emerging diseases have an animal base. Could you tell us a little more about that? Did I understand you well? I find this a little alarming. Is this much higher than before? To me, 75% is a very high percentage. What was it previously? What are the causes? In the case of humans, it's commonly said that prevention is better than cure. Is there any way of reducing the risk of contamination for cattle?

[English]

Mr. Jonathan Wort: I think I'll ask Dr. Dittberner to reply to that question.

Dr. Gordon Dittberner: You're raising a very good point.

In terms of disease recognition and the question of emerging diseases, we're finding a greater tendency now for mutating or changing viruses. It probably has something to do with technology, and a lot to do with the changing demographics, both of people and animals: the interaction of people and animals has exacerbated the issue of greater emerging diseases with the linkage from animals. The 75% figure now quoted is certainly higher than it has been at any other time. So all of these new diseases have ready links to animals. That is a very high percentage.

The second point you raised is an excellent one when you asked, wouldn't it be better to spend more time and more effort at the first stage and try to control, eradicate, or eliminate the disease when it's in animals? We're right with you; we've been cheering for that and calling for that ourselves. The veterinary profession particularly has been saying that very, very strongly. I think the animal sector is saying that very strongly. We need to be putting more resources both into surveillance to find out where these diseases are and to attack and address them before they get into the human population, and we need to do a lot more in terms of disease research in order to find out how these diseases are developing and how they're being transmitted.

In terms of an example of that, an emerging disease has been West Nile virus. In Agriculture Canada, that is not a disease; it's not funded. No animal health research or surveillance is done by Agriculture Canada. There is only some funding support provided by Health Canada, and most of the diagnostic work is done by the

universities. So it's not a federal involvement; it's by a lot of private, provincial...and particularly the veterinary colleges.

But again, it really highlights the need to address these problems at the stage of the animal rather than the human side. Unfortunately, in Canada we spend very little. Less than 1% of all the research money that goes into human health is put into animal health. I think there's certainly been a call; the veterinary colleges have made the plea now for more than four or five years that we need to have a mechanism for funding of animal health research.

I'm going off a little bit, I understand, but it is important to recognize that animal health research in Canada conducted by the federal government only covers what is referred to as "reportable diseases". That is limited to about 30 specific diseases. All the other animal health diseases are not covered through this, and no research funding is provided for them. There is a research program through NSERC and CIHR, but veterinarians and veterinary colleges have to compete for that money. In some cases, they've been successful, but the great majority of that goes to human health research, not to veterinary or animal health research.

I've gone on a little bit longer, but your point is really well made. We couldn't ask to have greater support for that kind of need.

•(1630)

The Chair: Thank you, Dr. Dittberner.

Do you have something, very quickly, Mr. Taylor?

Mr. Matt Taylor: I just wanted to indicate that the points you've raised really do highlight the integrated nature of both public health and animal health. If you're going to develop a sound public health policy, you do have to give some consideration to animal health. Similarly, when you're developing an animal health strategy, you have to consider the wider risks to the public as a result of your livestock.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We now move to the Bloc. Mr. Bellavance.

[Translation]

Mr. André Bellavance (Richmond—Arthabaska, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you for your presentations.

I represent a farming region with many dairy producers. The BSE crisis is therefore a great concern to me.

Mr. Taylor, you surprised me greatly earlier when you said that zoning was not fully effective in the case of BSE. I believe that Quebec's Union des producteurs agricoles and even the McCain family, outside Quebec, would disagree with you. You're talking about zoning. We call it "regionalization of sanitary practices". I think the terms have exactly the same meaning.

Could you explain why, in your view, zoning isn't necessarily effective in the case of BSE? Maybe one of you studied the situation in Europe where the first cases occurred. Today, I wouldn't say everything is perfect but I think we somewhat regionalized our sanitary practices and that things are better. I'm trying to see if we can find elsewhere better ways that we can use here.

[English]

Mr. Matt Taylor: Perhaps you're aware of it more than I am, but I'm not aware of a country that has applied zoning, and certainly not a major exporting country that has applied zoning for BSE, that has regionalized within its own borders.

What we're getting at is that to have a sustainable livestock industry, we believe Canada needs to be able to deal with a contagious disease. To do that effectively, we need zoning. Would zoning have been an effective response to BSE? It might have been. I guess the real question would be whether or not our trading partners would have accepted it. As I say, we would be plowing new ground in that area.

Would zoning have helped us control the spread of BSE? Again, zoning has been developed mostly from the perspective that it's a tool to control the spread of a contagious disease. With BSE not being a contagious disease, our feeling—and I think the industry's feeling—is that it wouldn't have been that effective in controlling the spread of a disease.

There are some arguments that say you could have done it, but both the Government of Canada and the industry have elected not to go that way. But certainly for highly contagious diseases, like foot-and-mouth disease, hog cholera, Newcastle, avian influenza, and all of those things—and there are an awful lot more of them than there are TSEs—zoning is an effective and recognized response.

Mr. Clare Schlegel: And it's working around the world.

The Chair: Mr. Wooddisse.

Mr. Ron Wooddisse: I think zoning would not be effective to our trading partners. In fact, as we see under OIE guidelines and under those of the rest of the world, all of North America is actually being affected in the same manner—not just Canada, but North America—because of integration, because of the time it takes to spread the disease. It is spread through feed, and it could take from three to seven years to incubate. Zoning would not help in this case because of our integrated market, feed going back and forth, and livestock going back and forth.

• (1635)

[Translation]

Mr. André Bellavance: You surely heard of bluetongue. We were talking earlier about trading partners. I want to have your views on something. There is a partnership between the U.S. and Canada related to this disease that can strike feeder cattle. For example, Canada buys U.S. feeder animals from bluetongue-free States. Could we have similar measures for other diseases like BSE? For example, our trading partners could get their beef from a province that is free from BSE. Would it be possible to link these two situations?

[English]

Mr. Ron Wooddisse: The problem with bluetongue is that it is caused by a *Culicoides* insect biting, with an immediate transmission of the disease. It is well known that eastern Canada has no vector. In other words, the *Culicoides* bugs can't live long enough to infect our herd from infected animals coming in, so we're now going to allow them in. Again, it has to be an immediate transmission of the disease that's here, whereas BSE is a long-term development suspected to be from feed. You can't see or hear it coming for three to five years.

The bluetongue issue is a separate issue because it is immediate. It is found only at certain degrees of temperature in which the bugs can live and can take blood from one animal and put it into another to spread that disease. In eastern Canada, it has been known for several years that we have no possible way of transmitting that disease once the animal gets here, so we have been almost needlessly blockading U.S. access on bluetongue. It's been a red herring, basically.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Ritz.

Mr. Gerry Ritz (Battlefords—Lloydminster, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Gentlemen, there are some very interesting proposals here today. When I hear numbers like \$3.5 million tossed around when we've just had the beef sector hit by \$2 billion, it's a no-brainer. This type of thing needs to go ahead. I can't for the life of me understand why the minister, Agriculture Canada, the CFIA, and so on, are stalling you. If you've had your report in place since 2003, it just doesn't seem right that this stalling should be going on.

Even today, the minister is saying that all of these aspects have to be done through a three-way partnership. Of course, that means the federal government—in this case the CFIA, Agriculture Canada, and so on—the provincial governments, and producers, the industry itself. You folks are the industry. You're all in favour of it. Have you had discussions with the provincial counterparts? Are you getting anywhere on that line, or have you concentrated solely on the federal level?

Mr. Matt Taylor: All the discussions we've had in the consultation have been held jointly with industry and provincial and federal governments. We have obtained support from the industry and the provincial governments in terms of a willingness and an agreement that this is the general direction in which to go—i. e., develop the tools that the rest of the world recognizes as the ones needed to deal with a highly contagious disease outbreak.

It costs money. Industry's money comes in terms of its involvement and in-kind contributions throughout the development of these tools, and its provision of the expertise, knowledge, and time required; but it takes cash. Typically initiatives of this kind, if they're national in scope, have been funded through defined funding programs within Agriculture Canada.

Ours don't appear to meet the funding objectives very closely, and as a result have been funnelled towards the ACAP funding program. We just missed the first call for that initiative, which was May of last year. The second call was January 5; we had our projects in and now we're eagerly awaiting to hear whether or not they will be funded. Our hope would be that this takes place in the near future.

• (1640)

Mr. Gerry Ritz: I don't think there'd be a problem. Based on everyone's presentations that you've made here, this committee would probably support the initiative you're talking about. If a letter or a motion from this committee would help you at all, I'd be happy to move a motion today that this committee reinforce your project application for the \$3.5 million, if that's what you're asking for at this point.

Proactivity on these issues is everything; let's be ready. If the chair would accept it, I would certainly move that motion at this time.

The Chair: Let's entertain that at the closure of this meeting.

Mr. Gerry Ritz: We'll entertain it then, fine. But I just find it a no-brainer that we wouldn't be moving down this road. Certainly we are a trading nation. We're out there on the world stage. The rest of the world is watching.

I understand that CFIA has had its hands full. I was taking part in the Avian influenza hearings we had in Abbotsford as well. I've also been very much involved in the hearings on CWD in my area, on BSE and so on. The checklist of what went wrong is enormous; the checklist of what went right is very short, and we don't seem to be learning from this.

So when you folks start talking about being proactive on the next case—and there will be one, there's no doubt in my mind—I just cannot believe that \$3.5 million, an amount we use out of here in a couple of minutes, would mean that this wouldn't be done, and expedited.

I wish you well, and we'll certainly entertain that motion at the end of this committee.

Thank you for your intervention today.

The Chair: It goes back to the government side. Is there someone on the government side who has something right now?

Go ahead, Mr. Drouin.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Claude Drouin: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

If I understood well, someone said earlier that we would certainly have other crises within the next six to twelve months. I was flabbergasted to hear that, especially when we were told that we were better prepared than we thought to face the BSE crisis and that we learned something from it. Given our efforts and the fact that a traceability system should be in place within six months, I thought we were heading the right way. However, if we have other crises within the next six to twelve months, that means there are things we did not understand or which are unavoidable. I would very much like to have an explanation.

[*English*]

Mr. Clare Schlegel: I apologize, but I'm going to need to leave because I need to head to a meeting in Mr. Steckle's riding. I appreciate the time, and I want to personally thank each of you for your support in this area.

In terms of potential crises coming down the road, just as you and I don't know when we go to the doctor whether we'll come home with a cancer diagnosis, putting all the right tools in place and exercising properly certainly reduces the risk, and that's what this is all about, to try to minimize any potential risk. Canada is a world leader, as you said. We're exporting 50% of our pork, 50% of our beef. Between Canada and the United States, we're 50% of the world pork trade on the export market. The numbers are absolutely staggering, and it's really important that we maintain our high animal health status.

I want to personally thank you from the pork sector and on behalf of the Animal Health Coalition.

The Chair: Would you take my kindest regards back to those wonderful people in Huron—Bruce?

Mr. Clare Schlegel: Absolutely.

The Chair: Thank you for attending this afternoon.

Mr. Jonathan Wort: We were trying to bring home, I guess, with the comment on six to twelve months, that because of events in the last couple of years we believe we have an opportunity in the next six to twelve months to really get industry moving down the road. They're sensitized to the whole issue of animal health and disease. The longer we wait to start this process, the harder it will be to buy in from industry in general.

We recognize right now that we have some real opportunities to make some fast gains if we have the funding available to do the work. Industry recognizes the need for it. It's not that industry is going to be any less interested in doing it in a year or two, but they're certainly focused on trying to develop the appropriate tools to respond to animal health issues. It's forefront in their minds, whereas in six to twelve months there may be another issue that is more important.

The Chair: Dr. Dittberner.

Dr. Gordon Dittberner: I thought I'd comment, because, again, that is a very reasonable piece of information that's being requested.

Yesterday a note came out by the National Audit Office in the U. K., looking at their readiness and ability to deal with the issues following the outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease that they had. As most of you know, their whole department went through a very serious turnaround. The audit report says that they made progress, but they could face another outbreak anytime because of global trade, etc. Furthermore, they go on to say that they still have not done enough in terms of contingency planning and they have not involved some of the respective counsels in consultation.

I think this serves as a very useful lesson to us. I don't know who we should be asking, but at some point it might be useful to have our auditor have a look at Canada's readiness as a result of the outbreaks we have faced. Are we ready? Have we done enough preparation? I don't suspect we'll ever have done enough, but I think there's a lot more we can and should be doing.

• (1645)

The Chair: We'll move to Ms. Rivard.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Denise Poirier-Rivard: During the hearings on the BSE crisis, various groups and individuals asked for an amendment to the National Meat and Poultry Code in order to allow interprovincial trade in meat products produced in provincially licensed meat processing plants.

At this time, cattle breeders from Abitibi—Témiscamingue would like to have their animals slaughtered on the other side of the border, in North Bay, Ontario. This is much closer than Montreal but the North Bay packing plant is only provincially licensed. Without a federal license, the people from Abitibi—Témiscamingue would be unable to buy meat from their own cattle after it's been slaughtered in North Bay. What do you think of this situation?

[English]

Mr. Matt Taylor: I'll take the first crack at this.

Ron, if you want to follow up, that's fine.

This hearing is intended to address what we've learned from BSE and avian influenza and how we can be better prepared in the future. Our organization was working in advance of BSE and AI to determine what was needed for an outbreak of a highly contagious disease. That's really where our area of expertise lies. We're not experts in the response to BSE, etc., nor are we experts in the response to a specific thing like AI. Our members probably are.

The other point, I would say, is that you've held numerous hearings, I think, on both BSE and avian influenza. I'm going to turn it over to Ron for a second, if he wants to follow up. We're trying to focus on what we can do to learn from that and what the basic tools to put in place are. We're not the experts in terms of what was done well or could have been done better with BSE or AI.

Ron, perhaps you can follow up.

Mr. Ron Wooddisse: As Matt said, our emphasis is on the future and protecting ourselves from another outbreak, a contagious outbreak. BSE really isn't an outbreak of a contagious disease.

The problem you've talked about is getting rid of the huge buildup of product, either through slaughter or some way of disposal. Certainly one of the things that would help us in the long run to slaughter more livestock when we have an outbreak like this is to have the laws changed so that interprovincial slaughter and trade could happen, and we could still maintain our export status by using only federal inspection for export out of the country.

Yes, it's a small piece of the solution. We really want to aim at the prevention of a large-scale disease that would be far more disastrous to us than BSE has been.

The Chair: May I interrupt, Madame Rivard? You will continue, but one of our members has to leave and we have to maintain quorum here in order to hear motions. There has been a motion requested and I would clarify that motion.

How much money are we looking at in terms of the federal request for dollars? Is it one-third of the \$3.5 million, or is it \$3.5 million? What are we asking for?

• (1650)

Mr. Matt Taylor: Of the total cost of doing the projects we've submitted for, 50% has been applied to for ACAAF funding. Those are the cash costs.

The Chair: So we would need what, \$2 million?

Mr. Matt Taylor: No, \$3.5 million is the cash cost, and the other half is some cash and some in-kind cost, which has been provided or

is being put up by industry. So what we're looking for is \$3.5 million.

I don't want to be as naive, though, as to suggest that the \$3.5 million is all that needs to be done.

The Chair: No, I understand, but what you're asking from the federal government is \$3.5 million?

Mr. Matt Taylor: That's right.

The Chair: Okay.

I think we can do this simply by consensus. Do we have consensus to look at a motion without 48 hours' notice? That's the first question. Are you in agreement that we have unanimous consent to deal with this motion?

I see agreement. The motion would then be that we support the request of our presenters today for the amount of \$3.5 million to support their efforts in going forward as has been requested. We'll draft the motion in language that's appropriate—

A voice: In the letter, yes.

The Chair: — but that's the consensus of the motion.

We'll address it to the minister.

That would be the motion. Is there any debate? It appears not.

(Motion agreed to [See *Minutes of Proceedings*])

The Chair: Now, Mr. Drouin, you may leave and arrive in time for your flight, which is going to be delayed by two hours.

Madame Rivard, you may continue. I apologize.

Ms. Denise Poirier-Rivard: I've finished.

The Chair: Okay.

I know Mr. Bezan is next, but I want to put something on the table and perhaps bring us back along the lines of Mrs. Ur's questioning earlier, because Mr. Ritz, Mrs. Ur, Madame Rivard, and I were in Abbotsford a number of weeks ago.

Response is so important at a time like that. Did we do it right? Some things were done right, but in the one and a half days we were there I think we found there were many instances when we did not do things right, not because the intent wasn't there. We didn't perhaps use the local people. We didn't connect with the local veterinary people. We had times when there was a delay in terms of response, on samples sent to Winnipeg and for the response to get back.

We need a first-response agency. I think that was something that was talked about. We've mentioned it here today. Where should the base be for our first-response team? Should there be one in every province? Should there be one that would be trained and able to respond to anyone, such as a DART team?

Let's talk about that for a moment. We're going to be talking about this as we go down the road. I think it's a very important thing, because when it happens again...and it will happen again, but we don't know just when. You perhaps have some recommendations. I think we need to hear that today.

Mr. Matt Taylor: Without getting into the debate about whether it's federal, provincial, or whatever—

The Chair: Yes, let's not get into that.

Mr. Matt Taylor: — if you look at public health, they have that kind of capability.

If you look within the States, they have developed it within their animal health capability. They would have—I forget what they're called—I think they're called SART teams, which is state area response teams. They're either on a state level or on a three- or four-state level. They have developed that kind of mobile quick-response capability.

Similarly, there are some states that individually have left strategically stockpiled equipment that would be mobile and ready to go immediately.

That's not involved in the projects we're putting forward, but if you want to start looking at an animal health and emergency management program within an overall animal health strategy, that's some of the kind of thinking we would want to see go into that.

The Chair: Mr. Wort.

Mr. Jonathan Wort: What we're proposing in terms of industry emergency preparedness, planning, and planned development is an important component of what you're talking about. The ability to understand how government and industry interact and to practise in those situations would, I believe, in some measure address some of the issues you've identified. People's roles and responsibilities would be more clearly defined, and there would be the opportunity to test these plans and have simulations, which we've done on a very limited basis in the past. People would understand their responsibilities and roles far more clearly. Not only that, you'd know and understand the people you were dealing with, whether in CFIA or in provincial veterinary medical infrastructures, and they would know the industry players too.

Not being totally familiar with what happened with AI, I think that some of the issues that relate to that are more than likely due to people trying to figure how to communicate, because they've never had to do it before.

We all know that when we're under stress, we don't communicate particularly well in the first place. Here you are, you're throwing people who aren't used to working together and maybe don't understand all the principles they operate under into the same room, hopefully—but probably not—and expecting them to function together effectively. What we want to do is to create those linkages in advance of the next event so we can respond more effectively as an industry.

•(1655)

The Chair: Mr. Dittberner.

Dr. Gordon Dittberner: Thank you.

I think I'm going to answer in two parts just because you're doing a bit of brainstorming here.

The first part, the response to whether there should be a national or a regional component, is that I like the idea of provincial capabilities. It has been tossed around before and it should be developed. It'd be a provincial-federal or federal-provincial team, but you'd need to have that capability in each province rather than trying to have a central team that flies up but doesn't know the area. That would be my first suggestion.

But probably before I even went to that stage, I would come back to what the coalition is really getting at and driving at, that we need to have an animal health strategy and we need to be all involved in the strategy so we can say we understand what our respective roles are and so we can work together to say here's how we should do it. And if I'm wrong in saying provincially, then maybe when everybody's together and deciding how it should be, they'll come up with something that's better. But we really need to take that strategic approach together so we'd be able to then set out the parameters for dealing with emergency management and for dealing with all the animal health issues.

The second part—and I can't emphasize it enough—is that we are still not doing enough in terms of disease surveillance. I'm worried about things like chronic wasting disease; there's been a lot of concern about it. We are still not doing enough in terms of general wildlife disease surveillance. If we don't know what's out there, we are not going to be ready to respond when the disease hits us. That's exactly what happened with BSE and that's exactly what happened with avian influenza. Those are classic examples. We should have been further ahead. Now, we've done a lot to improve, but those are really key points.

The third part of this is that we really have to strengthen the infrastructure we need, and I again come back to the diagnostic capabilities. We need to make sure the provincial laboratories across the country are ready and capable. Now, fortunately I have a lot of positive comments to make about B.C. as to their laboratory capability, but that isn't universally the case and we need to have that. It requires investment and it requires a plan. It requires a network and it needs to be put in place before we have another outbreak. It's really important, plus a lot of the facilities are simply not adequately resourced. They don't have the people, they don't have the equipment, they don't have the protocols in place, some of the facilities are not there, and that needs to be done.

I've mentioned the fact that the universities.... In fact, in Canada, other than CFIA, there are no level 3 bio-containment facilities. One of the previous ministers, Mr. Vanclief, went down to the States and saw, when they were dealing with emergency management issues, that it's one of their universities.... They have two bio-containment facilities at level 3, and we don't have one in Canada. So how do we train our people if we don't have these facilities? We really need to have this at the university level, where a lot of the animal health research and diagnostic work is being done, because the concern many of these diagnosticians have is that a disease is going to come into the lab and it's going to spread either to people or to the population because the bio-security levels are not adequate at some of these facilities. So that's the next part.

Again, the fourth part is that we really have to do something about the animal health research. If there are areas where we need to do something that can fit in with the global animal health strategic approach, I think that's critical.

That's a long answer to your question.

• (1700)

The Chair: I appreciate that, and we have to go down that road at some point in time. I know the discussion surrounding zoning has been talked about today. It's around this table. We know that zoning doesn't work in BSE; it's a different situation. If we look at what we're talking about here in terms of immediate-response teams and that type of thing—even if for other purposes—could we look at zoning, looking at east, west, and central regions, and having the capability at research levels, having centres for each province? At least when it's a western issue, it becomes then a Manitoba-west issue, and if it's a central Canada issue, it would become an Ontario-Quebec issue. It could also become a maritime issue, an eastern issue.

Would that make any kind of sense to you? I'm brainstorming as we're talking, but at some point in time we have to put our thoughts on paper.

Mr. Jonathan Wort: What we're proposing with the zoning and the break at West Hawk Lake is really the first stage. Our intent is to learn and develop the skills that we would need to export that into other parts of the country. Clearly, as Matt indicated, there are other places where very logical barriers could be established.

Once we understand the implications and the process that we need to establish these zones, it could be done in other places relatively quickly and easily, but we've picked West Hawk Lake because it's a very clear area, and it splits the country more or less in half. It's the place that we elected to start the process. We've talked about more zones, clearly, but we realize that we have to start somewhere and we need something that's manageable, so we feel that this is a manageable approach to the start of the process.

The Chair: Thank you for giving us some direction and at least helping us in our thought processes.

Mr. Bezan.

Mr. James Bezan: It was interesting to hear your comments about the wildlife and having to do more testing there. As you know, we have a testing program going on in Riding Mountain National Park with the elk and the white-tailed deer and tuberculosis. We also have zoning going on around the park. Could you comment on that and how it's been progressing, if you've been following that issue at all?

Mr. Matt Taylor: I think the zoning around Riding Mountain National Park is an example where, as with AI in B.C., we were effectively able to develop zoning on an ad hoc basis. It was accepted with some negotiation, but our trading partners were not familiar with it in advance of that. The effort here is to ensure that in the event of a highly contagious disease, they've got that recognition that we can do it—at the start in one place, but other places as well. That's really the effort behind the zoning initiative.

The Chair: Dr. Dittberner.

Dr. Gordon Dittberner: I think that the zoning, the use of surveillance, and the work being done are proving to be extremely

useful and valuable. Of course, we are also premised that we're dealing with a disease we are very familiar with. We've all been fairly well trained in it, and I think that has a certain number of advantages, but it's exactly the kind of thing we should be doing—we can monitor what is happening in the wildlife population, where that disease is moving in and out, and take appropriate action by having the appropriate zone, so that's really right on target with the sorts of things we should be doing.

That's fine when we're dealing with a disease we know. We still don't know enough about things like BSE and other TSEs, and now we've just heard that in France they have found BSE in a goat. They are starting to ramp up their surveillance in sheep and goats. We've done surveillance of sheep for scrapie, but I think we've got to look at the BSE issue in other species as well, and that's exactly the point to be getting back to on both surveillance and research. We need to be doing more in that regard.

• (1705)

Mr. James Bezan: You've been talking today primarily about being proactive, about planning.

If we have another major disease outbreak, the way we've been handling things in Canada is with a scorched earth policy. You also mentioned new research, new testing. Can you elaborate on how you feel that might change the scorched earth policy? Do you see it as a policy that we're going to maintain, including the high government dollars involved in compensation for producers? It's the most stressful thing a producer will go through, and it's the most costly thing the government engages in.

Mr. Matt Taylor: Certainly there are new techniques and new approaches, alternatives to the scorched earth process. Everybody is looking for alternatives.

At the moment—and I don't know that “scorched earth” is necessarily the best word for it—Canada has to use what's recognized, and at the same time I think we have to contribute toward the development of new approaches. I think it would be in Canada's interests to work with the U.S. to determine, for instance, the acceptable use of FMD vaccines for trade between Canada and the U.S., because we sure as hell would like to be the first to recognize each other's use of it, if that's what's going to happen.

Gord, do you want to...

Dr. Gordon Dittberner: I'll say a couple of things on that.

You're right that it is creating more and more of a concern, not only from the public health aspect. There are also animal welfare concerns, environmental concerns. So these things are broadening. Plus, the science is developing.

There are a lot of programs where we're now into a position where we have medications that can be used for certain diseases. I'm not talking about foot-and-mouth disease, but there are things they're looking at. Certainly a number of drugs are being considered for the avian influenza outbreak in Asia. I don't think it's going to help them, but at least they're looking at it, so it may be an opportunity for the future. Vaccines are another thing they're looking at.

So I would see that some of these things have to be addressed. As Matt said, we are addressing them, but if we had some more research going into those sorts of things, yes, we might be able to stop those diseases getting into the human population. It would make a hell of a lot of sense if we were to be able to do that, rather than sticking with the old system of trying to destroy all the animals.

The Chair: Yes, Mr. Taylor.

Mr. Matt Taylor: Could I just add one supplemental?

Your members have identified a number of interesting and good ideas that probably need to be given a whole lot of consideration, and our effort is not to say no or yes to any of those. I think what we see is that Canada is starting toward developing a national animal health strategy, and I think that's where those issues need to be considered, engaged, and encouraged to flourish.

We're actively supporting the development of a national animal health strategy, and we want to have a front row in its development. We believe the other members of the industry, the provinces, and all the stakeholders need to be there. So we're not discouraging that kind of talk, but we're trying to work within our scope of capability here. We know that there are about six projects the industry is ready to do. We think there's a funding program in place that could fund them. We've done the consultation and the strategy development to get it on the road. Really, we're just trying to focus on that at the moment.

When we get the opportunity to comment on an animal health strategy, those are the kinds of comments we take forward and I think others would hope to take forward as well.

Mr. James Bezan: Mr. Chair, I think we've had a great discussion on this and it's our responsibility now to push this with the minister to make sure we get the ball rolling so that these discussions can come to fruition and we'll be better prepared in the future.

The Chair: Ms. Rivard, you have something more you wanted to ask?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Denise Poirier-Rivard: You spoke earlier of scrapie and BSE. Could you explain the difference between these two diseases? We know that in the case of scrapie, we have to slaughter the entire herd. Please explain to us the difference between these two diseases.

•(1710)

[*English*]

Dr. Gordon Dittberner: I'm not going to be able to give you a good, descriptive differentiation between scrapie and BSE. In simpler terms, perhaps, scrapie is another one of the diseases of a prion nature that cause BSE and other diseases, such as chronic wasting disease. There are a few others, including, of course, Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease in humans.

These are prion diseases, and they're very new, in a sense. Plus, with the advent of scrapie—the disease had been recognized for many years not only in Canada but elsewhere in Europe as well—we have never made any linkage with the identification of the organism that causes that disease in cattle or in the human population. It was always considered to be something that was in the ovine species as a primary problem, occasionally in the caprine species as well. In essence, that protein, or the organism that creates the disease, has been limited to sheep only.

In the case of BSE, we only identified it in I guess the late eighties in the U.K., when they first did some of the work. The differentiation really is very minute in terms of the type of organism that creates the disease, but it has been almost exclusively limited to cattle. It was subsequently postulated and confirmed, I guess, in terms of the relationship and connection with human disease, but a lot of work is still being done. The distinguishing feature is that in cattle it causes one kind of disease, which is the debilitating disease. In scrapie it tends to initiate with irritation of the skin, a lot of itchiness, before you get some of the neurological signs as well. In essence, they are both diseases of the nervous system of the animal.

I'm not sure if I'm giving you enough. That's a very general sort of discussion. They are complex, and really, from a scientific point of view, there is still a lot that needs to be found out about both those diseases, and in fact about all of them. CWD is another one; we know very little about that disease.

The Chair: Have you anything to add, Mr. Wort?

Mr. Jonathan Wort: Yes.

We are very concerned in the sheep industry about scrapie. We've been trying to develop the tools to address this in terms of flock certification and encouraging active national surveillance. Scrapie has been recognized as a disease in sheep since the early 1700s. Since the time of its recognition as a disease, it's clearly never been, to anybody's knowledge, a human health issue. The difference with that is...and obviously there has been a link made between BSE and variant Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease.

There has been a concern over the last few years that we don't understand prion diseases—to any extent at all, really. The science is just beginning to develop around prion diseases. There has always been concern about cross-species jumping of prion diseases, and this case of a BSE-positive goat is quite a concern internationally. But from our perspective in North America, the reality is that we are at a low incidence for BSE. The opportunity for BSE to spread into other species is even more limited than what it would be in Europe.

We're concerned about that, but we also want to have people clearly understand that scrapie is not a human health issue. You talk about mass depopulation in terms of scrapie; well, scrapie has been a reportable disease in this country since 1945. As part of that reportable disease process, of basically flock to population, we're seeing some very positive changes in the policies that CFIA has with regard to control of scrapie. We're looking at different ways of approaching the disease control itself. In fact, this year money has been allotted to do active surveillance for scrapie, which we believe is very positive also.

So the CFIA is moving in the right direction. They need more resources to deal with these issues. As Dr. Dittberner pointed out, we really need more surveillance, not just for BSE but for all TSEs in this country, whether it's chronic wasting disease or scrapie. That's one of the big issues, and it's one of the big reasons why the sheep industry is currently shut out of exporting to the United States: we haven't been able to demonstrate adequate surveillance levels for scrapie.

•(1715)

The Chair: Okay. Thank you very much for your presentation today.

I believe at the outset of the meeting, Mr. Bezan had asked for a report to be forwarded to the committee. Could that report be forwarded to the clerk at some point and then for translation, so that all members of the committee can receive that report? You know which report it is. You will forward it to our clerk.

Thank you, Mr. Wooddisse, Dr. Dittberner, Mr. Wort, and Mr. Taylor, and, in his absence, Mr. Schlegel, for attending today. I gathered from the questions today and the interest in this matter that

this is something that will probably cause you to come to the table again sometime in the future.

Thank you. Thank you for appearing.

Mr. Jonathan Wort: On behalf of the coalition, I'd like to thank the chair and the members of the committee for the opportunity to be here this afternoon. We appreciate your time. We certainly appreciate your support of our initiatives.

Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you.

The meeting stands adjourned.

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Publié en conformité de l'autorité du Président de la Chambre des communes

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