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Chair: Mr. Kody Blois



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• (1905)

[*Translation*]

The Chair (Mr. Kody Blois (Kings—Hants, Lib.)): I call this meeting to order.

Welcome to meeting No. 66 of the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-food.

I will start with a few reminders. Today's meeting is taking place in a hybrid format. The proceedings will be made available via the House of Commons website. Just so you are aware, the webcast will always show the person speaking, rather than the entirety of the committee.

We have a lot of substitutions this evening. Ms. Khalid is replacing Mr. Turnbull, Mr. Bains may be replacing Ms. Valdez for the second half of the meeting, Mr. Doherty is replacing Mr. Barlow, Mr. Johns is replacing Mr. MacGregor, and Ms. Lantsman is replacing Ms. Rood.

Welcome to the committee.

[*English*]

It's great to see you all.

Colleagues, we were a bit disrupted by the votes.

I don't foresee there being a vote. I don't think that's possible, but in case somehow this happens, I would ask for your unanimous consent that if a vote comes up, we vote virtually from this room and that we don't take, necessarily 10 or 15 minutes.

As the chair, I will give a reasonable period to vote, but we don't want to disrupt our witnesses who are in the room.

Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: Okay, that's great. That's perfect.

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2) and the motion adopted by the committee on Monday, April 17, 2023, the committee is resuming its study of animal biosecurity preparedness.

I would now like to welcome the witnesses who are joining us tonight.

From Animal Health Canada, we have Colleen McElwain, who is executive director. I think she may be joining us online. Thank you for joining.

From the Canadian Pork Council, we have René Roy, the chair; and Audrey Cameron, director of on-farm programs. Welcome, and thank you so much for your patience as we get through some of the procedural elements in the House.

[*Translation*]

From Les Éleveurs de porcs du Québec, we have Yvan Fréchette, First Vice-President, and Raphael Bertinotti, Director, Quality, Health, Research and Development.

Welcome to the committee.

[*English*]

With Ontario Pork, we have John de Bruyn, who is chair of the board of directors, and Tara Terpstra. Tara, it's good to see you. It was nice to meet you just before we got started. John, of course, is chair of the board of directors, and Tara is the vice-chair. Thank you for making the trip in and being here in person.

We're going to have five minutes for opening remarks, and then we're going to turn it over for questions.

Colleagues, we have some work to do. We're going to go to maybe just shy of two hours today with our two panels, and then we have a bit of work to get done. We have had some delays over the last couple of weeks.

I'm going to turn it over to the Canadian Pork Council and Monsieur Roy.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Roy, you have the floor for five minutes.

Mr. René Roy (Chair, Canadian Pork Council): Good evening.

Thank you, Mr. Chair, for inviting us to appear before the committee.

Thank you as well to the committee members for your work on this issue.

My name is Rene Roy, and I am the chair of the Canadian Pork Council. Joining me is our director of on-farm programs, Audrey Cameron.

I am also chair of Animal Health Canada, and our executive director Colleen McElwain is also here as a witness. We are also pleased to be joined by the representatives of Les Éleveurs de porcs du Québec and Ontario Pork, two of our provincial members.

Throughout the industry, we are seized with the questions around biosecurity, and we have made great strides at improving preparedness throughout the industry in recent years. We are also committed to ongoing improvements as we continue to work to keep African Swine Fever out of Canada.

[English]

The Canadian Pork Council is the voice of Canada's almost 8,000 pork farmers.

Our industry is responsible for almost \$5 billion in annual exports to more than 75 markets around the world. Indeed, pork exports represent almost 1% of Canada's world exports.

Let's talk about what we would like to see.

We would like to see better tools and testing capabilities for disease surveillance, so we can track outbreaks more quickly and work to eliminate health threats.

We would also love to see a cross-government initiative set up related to wild pig eradication. At present, CFIA is leading the initiative, but it's not really a food issue. We intend to work with government to include Natural Resources Canada in the mix, as well as Parks Canada, as we seek to eradicate this invasive species.

Finally, we continue to seek harmonization of regulation as much as possible with the United States on this issue. Given the integrated nature of our industry on both sides of the border, the more we can collaborate with USDA on biosecurity engagement, the better.

What have our efforts to improve biosecurity entailed thus far, and what would we like to see?

As an industry, we have done very good work on traceability programs, and PigTrace is recognized as the best in class traceability program around the world. Its existence has allowed us to respond quickly to outbreaks of Seneca Valley virus, among others, to contain outbreaks quickly and to mitigate their impact on the industry.

We have also worked with livestock transporters to ensure that our transportation practices maximize biosecurity at every step. There's work we have undertaken with AAFC, CFIA and others in the industry. We also provide our members with training and on-farm programs to help guide their biosecurity decisions, and we work continually to improve those standards. Our international trading partners recognize us as a leader in this area, and we continue to work to maintain that position globally.

Thanks to government funding for ASF preparation, we continue to work to develop tools and tool kits for farmers to use on farm to ensure that they have the best available knowledge about prevention tools and other best practices.

Thank you. We'll be ready to take your questions.

• (1910)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We'll now turn to Les Éleveurs de porcs du Québec.

[Translation]

Mr. Fréchette or Mr. Bertinotti, you have the floor for five minutes.

Mr. Raphael Bertinotti (Director, Quality, Health, Research and Development, Les Éleveurs de porcs du Québec): Good evening, everyone.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear today.

I will start off with an overview of biosecurity in Quebec's pork industry and then finish with a brief analysis of its strengths and weaknesses.

Biosecurity comprises all measures designed to reduce disease transmission. It is also the foundation of our business. Canada enjoys an animal health situation that is the envy of the world, and that privileged situation has enabled us to become a leading global exporter. We export some 70% of what we produce. Countries such as Spain and Brazil have become major competitors too as a result of animal health improvements made in those countries.

We are dealing with three main types of health threats: reportable diseases such as African swine fever, or ASF, emerging diseases such as porcine epidemic diarrhea, and endemic diseases such as porcine reproductive and respiratory syndrome, or PRRS, or influenza. Each disease has its own characteristics and therefore its own biosecurity measures framework.

Biosecurity can be developed country-wide, across Canada, a region, a hog operation or at a farm site.

Improving the health of our herds in Quebec is central to our industry's strategic plan. We have established a provincial organization through which we can discuss health issues, and we are working hard to develop an ASF emergency plan that's actually quite advanced.

Many other organizations operate in the maintenance and improvement of swine health in Quebec. Given our biosecurity strengths, Canada's favourable geographic situation is clearly an asset.

There are no wild pigs in Quebec, which isn't the case in the rest of Canada. Even though we are sometimes inadequately funded, our business ecosystem focusing on health issues and our disease monitoring capabilities are some of our strengths. Our vaccine research and production capabilities are as well. We will soon be deploying an influenza vaccine based on porcine strains circulating in Quebec.

Our degree of biosecurity compliance has distinctly improved. Since 2017, we have conducted more than 1,100 biosecurity audits at our facilities and several dozens of others in our transportation businesses. Our success in systematically eradicating all porcine epidemic diarrhea contaminations has been one of our strengths.

As for our weaknesses, Canada must strive to reduce the costs associated with medication and vaccine approvals. It must also do more to control our borders to prevent ASF from being introduced into Canada.

I would remind you that, despite all the efforts we have remain disease-free, two major diseases from Asia have been introduced into Canada in the past decade, including, in particular, porcine epidemic diarrhoea.

In addition, there are reasonable grounds to question whether it is appropriate to designate ASF as a reportable disease. To provide some context, it must be understood that a single case of ASF among any branch of the suidae family in Canada—and that includes pets, for example—would destroy my industry and result in the humanitarian slaughter of half the hogs in Canada. That would include healthy hogs that would be unmarketable because we wouldn't be able to export them. It must be understood that the rules respecting this disease would be more consequential than the disease itself, which is unacceptable.

To limit this kind of human and economic disaster, we must have functional trade zoning agreements enabling us to recover our export capacity in the space of a few days. However, we don't have that at the present time.

Under the agreement that we've signed with the United States, implementation times are too long and subject to a potential political decision. The agreement we have reached with the European Union is subject to non-tariff barriers. We must also sign compartmentalization agreements, and funding will be needed to implement them.

At the provincial and even national level, transportation is still the weak link, despite all previous efforts. We need more cleaning and drying stations across the country.

At the regional level, distances among our farms aren't always enough to prevent certain diseases such as PRRS and influenza from spreading via aerosols. The costs to install filtration systems need to be lowered.

We need to continue complying with biosecurity protocols in our businesses, and we are striving to improve this aspect. The digitization of our industry would be a lever that would help improve compliance with those protocols.

Thank you very much.

We will be pleased to answer your questions.

• (1915)

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Bertinotti.

We will now give the floor to the representatives of Ontario Pork.

[English]

Mr. John de Bruyn (Chair of the Board of Directors, Ontario Pork): Good evening. As mentioned, my name is John de Bruyn, chair of Ontario Pork, and I'll be sharing my time with Tara Terpstra, the vice-chair.

We're pleased to present to this committee the ongoing activities and investments to improve biosecurity preparedness and prevent the threat of foreign animal diseases—in particular, African swine fever—to the Canadian swine industry, as well as many other hazards to animal and human health.

Biosecurity is critical to reduce the spread of swine diseases across the industry. There are many diseases that, if they enter a barn, will have devastating impacts on the farm and the industry. As part of our presentation, we would like to share our perspective from the Ontario pork sector.

The Ontario pork sector represents a significant share of Canada's agriculture and food sector. We're currently just under a thousand producers in Ontario who market just shy of six million hogs. Ontario's pork producers are among the world's leaders in animal care, food safety, quality and traceability.

For an industry that exports roughly two-thirds of our domestic production, international market access is the cornerstone of economic success. Any foreign animal disease entering Canada would have a severe and negative impact on the pork sector, as well as on our economy. An ASF outbreak in Canada would result in an immediate border closure to both live animals and pork products. We welcome government support to help us prevent and prepare for foreign animal disease outbreaks.

Many swine diseases, if they enter a barn, will have devastating impacts on the farm and the industry. Depending on the disease, the stage of production and the size of the barn, an outbreak could have a significant impact on my farm. A great deal of effort and investment was put into biosecurity on farms and continues to be invested over the years here.

Due to diverse protection systems and marketing arrangements, there's significant animal movement between different locations within the swine sector, which makes us a bit unique as an industry across Canada. Some critical control points within supply chains still require further attention and investment to bridge the gaps. These critical control points, from Ontario's perspective, are assembly yards and livestock trucks, as well as processing plants, which are currently considered by producers as having an increased risk of exposing animals and vehicles to disease-causing agents.

Since these areas are considered central hubs of animal movement, they require a more sizable investment in biosecurity measures to be effective.

• (1920)

Ms. Tara Terpstra (Vice-Chair of the Board of Directors, Ontario Pork): We strongly support the creation and maintenance of the Canadian foot-and-mouth disease vaccine bank. We ask the government and government agencies to remain vigilant with respect to foreign animal disease prevention and preparedness. This includes the Canada Border Services Agency, to enhance preventative measures such as surveillance, awareness and education to all entry points in Canada; the CFIA, to improve the efficiency of screening of imported feed ingredients, and rapid testing protocols and procedures to resolve suspected cases found on our farms; and AAFC, to create a framework to further the investment into biosecurity enhancements and research to be utilized throughout the value chain.

The Ontario swine industry has a proven record of continuous improvement and investment in biosecurity measures over the years at the farm level. Biosecurity in the swine industry continues to evolve as new methods are adopted. Strategic investment in new research infrastructure is key to developing improved practices and solutions with respect to emerging animal health challenges, the development of new vaccines, and biosecurity measures that could be applied across the value chain.

When it comes to on-farm biosecurity, putting preventative measures in place to keep animals healthy has been a long-standing and successful practice for Ontario hog farms. Any new regulations or programs related to biosecurity need to be flexible in design to allow producers to adapt through their farming operations without compromising biosecurity, effectiveness and industry competitiveness. If the past few years have taught us anything, it is that we cannot afford to be complacent, and we need to stay vigilant.

The Chair: Thank you very much. We'll now turn to questions.

[Translation]

Mr. Lehoux, you have the floor for six minutes.

Mr. Richard Lehoux (Beauce, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thanks to the witnesses for being with us this evening. I apologize for the delay.

All the witnesses have said how important it is to be well prepared to combat African swine fever.

I'll go first to Mr. Roy, from the Canadian Pork Council, and then perhaps to the other witnesses.

Mr. Roy, are we prepared to combat African swine fever?

Mr. René Roy: That's an important question.

The industry and government have worked very hard to improve the situation, but work remains to be done on crisis assistance programs.

I'll ask Ms. Cameron to provide more details on what's been done and what should be done.

Ms. Audrey Cameron (Director, On-Farm Programs, Canadian Pork Council): Good evening.

We're working hard every day to prepare numerous tools, but we're far from ready.

One of the first tools we would like to focus on is traceability. Our current traceability tool is the PigTRACE program, which is very well established. However, movements are currently reported over seven-day periods. We would like to develop tools, electronic tools, of course, to report them more frequently, even instantaneously. That aspect alone would entail a significant investment that would enable us to develop those electronic tools.

Mr. Richard Lehoux: You also mentioned the importance of border control. Is the Canada Border Services Agency adequately equipped for border tracking?

Mr. René Roy: The Canada Border Services Agency has made significant investments but we agree that the borders are very fluid. Additional efforts are needed, particularly when crises arise and diseases come from elsewhere, as was recently the case in the Caribbean. Additional resources are needed if we want to be able to monitor on various fronts.

• (1925)

Mr. Richard Lehoux: I see.

Should we invest a little more in the Canada Border Services Agency, if only because there's a shortage of veterinarians at the borders? We've been told that many times.

Is that still the case? What's your opinion on that issue?

Mr. René Roy: We do need additional resources, for monitoring purposes, among other things. For example, it's very important to have sniffer dogs to detect meat in particular.

Mr. Richard Lehoux: Generally speaking, should the government provide more support for research to put Canada in the forefront?

We know that, in some instances, these diseases develop quickly and elsewhere in the world. Are we conducting enough research to develop vaccines? That's an aspect of the issue that we can also work on.

Mr. René Roy: A major effort has been made on vaccines. We're discussing swine fever, but various diseases present high risk for our country. When vaccines are developed in cooperation with other countries, we all have an interest in controlling the disease.

Currently, no recognized vaccine can control swine fever. However an international effort is being made to find vaccine candidates.

Mr. Richard Lehoux: I don't remember which witness raised the issue of vaccine approval. Is it possible to consider exchanges, if they're developed elsewhere, in another country? I'm thinking, in particular, of the United States or the European Economic Community. If these vaccines were recognized here in Canada, we wouldn't have to waste time redoing all the studies.

What you think about that?

Mr. René Roy: It was Mr. Bertinotti who raised that.

What I can say is that the regulations have to be improved because it's very costly to develop new vaccines and health products. That puts a major damper on Canadian biosecurity, especially if we're trying to reduce the number of human health products we use, particularly class 1 products. The challenge is to come up with new products.

I'll let the other witnesses address that point.

Mr. Richard Lehoux: Do I still have a little time left, Mr. Chair?

The Chair: You have one minute left.

Mr. Richard Lehoux: All right.

I'll go to the representatives of Les Éleveurs de porcs du Québec. Do you have anything to add?

Mr. Yvan Fréchette (First vice-president, Les Éleveurs de porcs du Québec): Mr. Lehoux, I think Mr. Roy did a good job of summarizing what we wanted to tell the committee about approvals.

We should do the same thing with vaccine development as we did during the COVID-19 pandemic. We established an expedited approvals procedure for products that were recognized elsewhere in the world. We usually don't have that procedure here in Canada. There's no expedited procedure when the product is used in the United States or Europe, for example. We have to follow the usual procedures in Canada.

Canada is a small pork producer. Consequently, companies don't want to invest the millions of dollars necessary to sell their product.

Mr. Richard Lehoux: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Lehoux and Mr. Fréchette.

Mr. Drouin, you have the floor for six minutes.

Mr. Francis Drouin (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I want to thank my witness colleagues. I called them “my colleagues” because I've previously had a chance to work with them.

I'll start with you, Mr. Roy.

You mentioned that there was work to do. We discussed this in this committee a few years ago. That was more than five years ago, and there's still no plan. However, things seem to be moving. It's obviously still possible to prepare better.

I'd like to discuss border measures. Our Ontario colleague said that animal feed should be screened. We have to determine whether we need to put more measures in place or ensure that there is free trade at the border, knowing that it's impossible to screen everything that enters the country.

As far as you know, are there any technologies that we could use to avoid undermining free trade between the United States and Canada?

• (1930)

Mr. René Roy: When there's an effective system of penalties at the border, you don't need to monitor all goods there. That makes it possible to stop a lot more goods from entering. It's a tool that's available to us, but we also need to promote that penalty system. When tourists or other individuals who enter the country are aware of the system, that relieves the pressure of the disease on our country.

There's a lot of cooperation between the industry and governments, both federal and provincial. If you're interested, we could discuss the animal health issue.

Mr. Francis Drouin: Thank you very much.

Many measures have been prepared to prevent African swine fever. I'm trying to understand how you view the situation. If something happened on the farm of one of your producers, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency would intervene, wouldn't it?

Mr. René Roy: Yes, that's correct.

Mr. Francis Drouin: All right.

That disease isn't limited to pigs raised in Canada. There are also wild pigs living in the woods or in nature. Who would be responsible if the disease occurred in those natural environments? You can take action on the farm, but you have to deal with another authority at some point.

Do you think the various authorities are engaged in productive exchanges?

Mr. René Roy: Yes, but efforts have to continue in that direction. With your permission, I would ask Ms. McElwain to explain the cooperative work that Animal Health Canada has been doing in recent years.

[English]

Ms. Colleen McElwain (Executive Director, Animal Health Canada): Thanks, René.

When it comes to wild pigs, we have a 10-year strategy. It has recently been accepted as a final draft. We say draft, because there is an indigenous engagement component we need to undertake, as well.

The reason we came up with the strategy was to create a wild pig leadership group. This would be a multi-partner wild pig group to provide guidance on the regional expertise, because, certainly, when you think about wild pigs, it becomes an environmental consideration. There are many partners working together with the provincial pork organizations, as well as at the provincial government level.

We also work with the Canadian Wildlife Health Cooperative and the Canadian Council on Invasive Species as a part of this work. They help us as we're building those relationships. Certainly, Animal Health Canada comes from a bit more of an egg background. We're leveraging those different relationships to begin to look at how we eradicate...how we correctly determine the distribution of wild pigs, because if they are found in wildlife, it is still a foreign animal disease.

The CFIA would have some response component for that, but when it comes to containment—and all of the other activities that go with ASF if it were to be found in a Canadian wild pig, or a commercial pig—there would be very large trade ramifications, as my colleagues have mentioned.

It's definitely a collaborative effort. It will take a while to fully get the information on exactly where all the wild pigs are in the provinces where we know we have them. We know some do not. We are also looking at mapping activities, sharing more information, and really moving forward on best practices for eradication over the next 10 years.

Mr. Francis Drouin: From your experience dealing... Obviously, we're talking about ASF, but with other diseases that have come to Canada, and the role you're now playing and played before, do you find you're creating those links between those organizations or government bodies that may not necessarily be used to talking to one another?

Ms. Colleen McElwain: Yes, I would definitely say the multi-partner approach that Animal Health Canada takes working with federal, provincial and territorial governments, as well as with industry partners, is something that takes a different approach. This is because it allows each partner to bring its plans and concerns forward for discussion in a collaborative way, so it helps to break down silos. It also helps to identify areas of duplication and gaps, and areas where there might be some more synergy that can happen. Certainly, the model lends itself to this kind of scenario.

If we were to have a disease other than... We focus a lot on African swine fever, but other diseases could potentially present just as big a risk, such as something like foot-and-mouth disease. There are also endemic diseases that are out in the wildlife populations—

- (1935)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Ms. Colleen McElwain: There are other parasites too.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. McElwain. I was trying to let you finish, but I want to be mindful of time.

Thank you, Mr. Drouin.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Perron, you have the floor for six minutes.

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Thanks to the witnesses for being with us, both in person and virtually. We're grateful to you for that.

Mr. Roy, you spoke at length about the importance of prevention funding.

Ms. Cameron, you discussed the traceability system in place, but it reports at seven-day intervals. You say that the process should be much quicker and that it requires considerable investment.

If you had to make a recommendation to the government on that, what would it be with regard to investment? You may find it hard to cite amounts, but your recommendation could focus on permanent

funding, for example, which would allow for something consistent that would operate over the long term.

Mr. René Roy: Yes, long-term programming would enable the industry to structure itself more effectively and to deal with the various crises.

Funding for initiatives is currently granted on a five-year cycle. However, that means that, every five years, we don't know whether it'll be renewed. For monitoring, for example, it shouldn't be limited to five years. A long-term perspective should be adopted. That kind of effort would benefit both the industry and the entire population. We must have financial support from the government in order to apply this over the long term.

Would you like to add a comment, Ms. Cameron?

Ms. Audrey Cameron: With respect to tools, we have the traceability tool. What we currently need is a toolbox. We're trying to develop as many tools as possible, and we could develop many more. We really need support in order to do so. I could talk at length about compartmentalization, a subject that Mr. Bertinotti discussed earlier. That's all I can say for the moment.

Mr. Yves Perron: We unfortunately don't have a lot of time, but take it if necessary.

Are you able to manage those investments as an industry? Do you view that as a decentralization?

I'd also like to know how the five-year funding cycle works. Who manages that money? Do you think it's realistic given the various changes of government?

There should be something permanent, which would be somewhat contrary to the policy.

I'd like to hear your observations on that.

Mr. René Roy: Yes, getting funding outside the political cycle would afford the industry greater predictability. When we go and see our members to raise funds, we're seeking funding for the long term, not just for a few months.

We're seeking a broader form of cooperation, such as a coalition. The processors, for example, help us with certain initiatives.

It would be much easier to manage funding if we could rely on a partnership with the government. If we know we have long-term funding, we'll be able to rally all our members and go after additional funding from the industry.

Mr. Yves Perron: Thank you, that's much clearer for me.

Mr. Bertinotti, you said something that interested me. You said that the rules regarding the disease have more negative consequences than the disease itself.

Would you please explain to us what you mean and what we could do to improve matters? Do you have a recommendation to make in this regard?

Mr. Raphael Bertinotti: Since African swine fever is a reportable disease, when a case is reported, the borders are closed to export. Since we export a lot, that means we have to euthanize our healthy animals.

The fact that ASF is classified as a reportable disease puts us in quite an unusual situation globally. Diseases are classified in that category because they have a significant, even dramatic, social and economic impact, but here it's the fact that it's considered a reportable disease that amplifies the economic and social impact on our country because we export a lot.

I have two recommendations to address that. First, we must have effective zoning and compartmentalization agreements, somewhat like those of the Europeans. We met with the Danish about six months ago. They're exporters, but they never consider euthanizing healthy animals, simply because they have agreements that are based on European treaties. Under those agreements, if one case is reported from one day to the next, once they've circumscribed the zone, they can continue exporting to other European countries. This is similar to the principle of communicating vessels. However, it's not at all what we have in North America under our free trade agreement with United States and Mexico.

Second, we could consider removing African swine fever from the list of reportable diseases. However, I think that would be hard to negotiate internationally.

• (1940)

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Perron and Mr. Bertinotti. Time is unfortunately up.

Mr. Johns, go ahead for six minutes.

[English]

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): First, it's great to be able to join such an esteemed committee. I think you have gotten over a half dozen reports done. I come from OGGO, where we haven't completed a single study in two years. It's really good to be at a functioning committee.

I'm subbing for my good friend Alistair MacGregor, who's trapped at an airport, trying to make his way to Ottawa. It's been 24 hours so far in his journey. This is what it's like as Vancouver Island MPs, of which I am one. It can be quite difficult to get here.

It's an honour to be able to be here. This is such an interesting study. I want to thank all the witnesses for participating.

I'll start with an Animal Justice report that mentions a large number of biosecurity breaches that have occurred as a result of authorized personnel on farms. All it takes, I guess, is for one farm to make a mistake, and then we can get contamination to other farms.

I'm just going to read a quote from our critic, Mr. MacGregor, on the second reading on Bill C-275. He said:

...there is an Animal Justice report from 2021 that lists hundreds of incidents of failures of biosecurity that were all by authorized personnel associated with the afflicted farms. I will repeat that. All of those incidents came from people who were on the property with lawful authority and excuse. I want to quote from that report:

“Despite the risk to farms, animals, and the economy posed by disease outbreaks, biosecurity on farms is not comprehensively regulated at the federal level.

el. The CFIA publishes voluntary biosecurity guidelines for some animal farming sectors, developed in cooperation with industry and government. Adherence to these standards is not a legal requirement. Provincial legislation varies, and tends to empower officials to respond to existing biosecurity hazards instead of prescribing rules that farmers must follow to prevent disease outbreaks.”

Maybe I'll start with Mr. Roy and Ms. Cameron.

In 2019, Canada exported over 1.2 million tonnes of pork and pork products, valued at \$4.2 billion, to 94 countries.

Do farms need stronger regulation? Are the voluntary regulations enough when a multi-billion dollar industry is potentially at risk? Maybe you can speak to whether there should be a legal requirement.

Mr. René Roy: Our industry has no interest in having outbreaks. Let's say authorized personnel who enter and create some disease outbreaks are people doing their best to make sure these animals are healthy. Regulations on something that everybody wishes for would not help the situation. If you give a fine to somebody who is doing their best to keep everybody safe, it wouldn't help the situation.

There are tools that could be useful. For example, better understanding of where these diseases come from through research and also the promotion of best management practices would be useful.

Additional regulation would not bring a lot of efficiency in these circumstances.

• (1945)

Mr. Gord Johns: Mr. de Bruyn or Ms. Terpstra, do you have anything to add to Mr. Roy's comments and feedback?

Mr. John de Bruyn: It's a great question.

I think the first comment would be that biosecurity is not an on-and-off thing. It's a standard that just keeps increasing. The way I operate my farm today is way different from when I started. We always make improvements to biosecurity, and there is a lot of room for research in that area. There are new technologies being developed in other areas, in other fields of study, that I think our industry could maybe latch on to and improve our biosecurity.

It's a state of mind. If you're a farmer, biosecurity is a bit of a state of mind. There are these invisible lines in my barn that I just don't cross without changing my boots and coveralls.

It's all of those things.

Mr. Gord Johns: Do you want to add anything, Ms. Terpstra?

Ms. Tara Terpstra: I think you need to remember that we're all family farms, so our children also follow biosecurity. They're trained even at a young age on where they're to go and not to go. Yes, it's to be flexible, because my operation is very different from even my next-door neighbour's or John's.

Thank you.

Mr. Gord Johns: Back on May 16, 2019, Mr. MacGregor had an exchange with you, Mr. Roy, from the Canadian Pork Council, regarding the spread of wild boar across Canada over the past 30 years.

Mr. Roy, you were saying that African swine fever in pork livestock versus the wild boar population isn't that different and that there is definitely a threat to livestock when wild boar populations come prowling out of the forest.

Can you talk about what risks these animals pose to farmed pork? Also, have you noticed an influx in wild populations posing a threat to your farmed pork over the past four years, since that exchange with Mr. MacGregor? You talked about the relationships with the government, with Natural Resources Canada and Parks Canada. Can you elaborate on that?

The Chair: Unfortunately, you have about 20 seconds. Mr. Johns will have another crack at it.

Mr. René Roy: There is a threat, because the wild pig population can become a pool of the disease if the disease enters into the wild pig population. If we don't take care of it, the wild pig population will grow.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Johns.

Thank you, Mr. Roy.

We'll go to Mr. Steinley.

Mr. Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I'll do some rapid-fire questions.

This is for Animal Health Canada: How would the Ontario swine research barn support animal biodiversity preparedness? What would be some of the outcomes you would expect to see from the swine research barn?

Ms. Colleen McElwain: For biosecurity, on what they could do and what has happened in some other research projects, too, is things like swabbing of materials that come in and out of the barn. They can put tracers and map where, say, a potential pathogen might have moved through a barn. That might be one way that a research barn or facility could be used to help do research on biosecurity.

Some of the research has been done not necessarily in Ontario but in Quebec. They were on farm and actually assessed poultry industry practices with the farms to understand what they thought they were doing and how it was actually working. They used video cameras and came back to the producers and talked to them about what worked and didn't work and where they failed, because it also helps with best practice adoption and awareness building to build those knowledge transfer tools based on the research. It's about taking the research and putting it into common everyday practice to support—

Mr. Warren Steinley: That's perfect. I have only a few minutes, and I have another couple of questions.

I'm going to piggyback off Mr. Johns here and talk about wild boar.

In Saskatchewan, wild boar is a fairly substantive issue. In fact, I was reading that in a 90-kilometre circle around the city of Melfort, there are more wild boar than in all the rest of Canada.

My question would be for someone from the Pork Council. Do you have an idea of how much interbreeding is going on between domestic hogs and wild boar? Is that going to be a new invasive species?

Mr. René Roy: Yes, we've heard that there is some inbreeding. We are not experts on wild pigs and we don't have the details of the locations of all these sounders. We know we have to eradicate an invasive species before it gets worse and gets out of control.

• (1950)

Mr. Warren Steinley: Have you had conversations with the minister in regard to some of the wild boar issues? I know that the Government of Saskatchewan, to help with this problem, has now put an extra \$200,000 into the 2022 budget. The problem is only getting bigger in my home province. Have you had conversations with the minister and actually relayed how serious a problem this is in specific areas in the country?

Mr. René Roy: The provinces are also involved in the effort for eradication, so it's done at both levels.

We have made requests to find solutions. However, there is also a lot of collaboration that has to happen because of this interprovincial...and also between the two jurisdictions.

Yes, there is work that is done mainly at the provincial level, but collaboration has happened at the country level.

Mr. Warren Steinley: To Animal Health Canada, have we had more conversations with the minister about a vaccine bank, and where are those conversations at? Is there any provincial co-operation on a vaccine bank coming to fruition in the near future?

Ms. Colleen McElwain: To clarify, are you talking about foot-and-mouth disease or African swine fever?

Mr. Warren Steinley: I mean foot-and-mouth disease.

Ms. Colleen McElwain: At this stage, the development of a vaccine bank is being led by CFIA.

Animal Health Canada's role will be on the implementation. Basically, once we have that bank, how do we get it to the animals, should we need it? What's the process? What's the decision-making, and how does that work? It would be a multi-stakeholder, very resource-heavy activity to do.

When it comes to that FPT or federal-provincial-territorial conversation, my understanding is that this is sitting with the regulatory assistant deputy ministers. Unfortunately, I'm not a part of those conversations.

Mr. Warren Steinley: Did they give you any timelines? You said that you're going to help with the rollout if the vaccine bank comes to fruition. Have they given you any timelines on when that might be a possibility?

Ms. Colleen McElwain: They have not specifically. I know it is a high priority for them and they are actively working on it now.

Actually, my next step is to meet with CFIA in the very near term. I have a meeting scheduled with our chief veterinary officer to get a sense of those timelines and where Animal Health Canada can take the work it's already doing on the implementation to make sure that it remains complementary on both sides.

The Chair: Thank you very much to you both.

We'll now go to Mr. Louis for up to five minutes.

Mr. Tim Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga, Lib.): Thank you very much, Chair.

I want to thank all of the witnesses for being here and displaying the importance of the sector to our economy, including the importance to my riding of Kitchener—Conestoga. I mentioned before that it is home to Conestoga Meats, one of the largest pork producers in Ontario.

We heard in opening statements and from other witnesses, and I believe we can all agree, that producers, feed manufacturers, researchers, processors and governments at all levels all need to work together to ensure the safety of pork products and at the same time promote positive animal welfare outcomes.

I could start by directing my questions to the Canadian Pork Council.

Mr. Roy and Madame Cameron, you touched on the Canadian pork excellence platform, which has three components. You mentioned the traceability as a component.

There's also PigSafe, the food safety and biosecurity component of Canadian pork excellence, and PigCare, the animal care component.

I wonder if you could expand on those two as well, and anything you want to add about traceability.

Ms. Audrey Cameron: The Canadian pork excellence platform, as you said, includes the traceability, PigTrace; PigSafe and food safety; and animal care, which is the PigCare program. Those programs include biosecurity.

I would like to mention an additional program that we've been working on, the Canadian swine biosecurity best practices, which is a standard for biosecurity. Multiple tools have to be developed, as well, as part of this program.

I could also add compartmentalization to this. Compartmentalization is an additional tool. This is a little more complex. We have zoning, which is led by CFIA, and then industry needs compartmentalization as well.

I can come back to traceability, which would be with biosecurity. They are our two most important tools for ASF under the Canadian pork excellence platform.

• (1955)

Mr. Tim Louis: That would be great. Thank you.

In the interest of thoroughness, if it's possible, you could table a report or share that with the committee so that we can use it for our report. That would be very helpful.

I want to touch base also, while we're talking about it, on technology, which is good for the welfare of animals. It will ensure our food safety and increase our competitiveness in world markets.

In my region, there is a company called P&P Optica. It says it is an "automated solution for [food] safety and quality inspection" at the same time. They're working to find "low-density contaminants" and they can "measure [meat] quality at the same time...without compromising detection."

What kind of technology and improvements can we adopt, how is that data shared, and what can we do to share those best practices?

Mr. René Roy: We have a special list. I would propose that Mr. Bertinotti provide some examples of technologies that we have available, or maybe Mr. Fréchette wants to say a couple of words, because he's a specialist in this.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yvan Fréchette: Thank you.

For us to be able to export 70% of our pork, the quality of which is recognized, we have to complete documents in which we state that the animals are free of contaminants. Since we live in the digital era, we would like those paper documents to be replaced by mobile applications on our cell phones and tablets, for example. These documents have to follow the animals from farm to farm or from farm to slaughterhouse. They are paper documents, which can cause confusion when someone is sick or a transporter cancels at the last minute, for example.

Since we live in the digital era, we should design applications somewhat like what Ms. Cameron said about traceability in Canada. We have a team that could work on this in cooperation with outside consultants to design mobile applications. That would prevent errors and enable us to sign documents electronically, somewhat as we do at home when we receive a package via Purolator.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you very much to you both.

We'll now go to Monsieur Perron.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Perron, you have the floor for two and a half minutes.

Mr. Yves Perron: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Had you finished, Mr. Fréchette? Do you want to complete your answer?

Mr. Yvan Fréchette: I concluded by saying that it could be like what we do when Purolator or Dicom delivers a parcel to us at home.

Mr. Yves Perron: All right.

Many of you discussed the importance of vaccines and negotiating internationally recognized agreements.

How is that done? Do you have a specific recommendation to make on the subject?

Earlier someone talked about developing vaccines based on a procedure similar to that adopted to combat COVID-19. I don't remember who discussed that.

Mr. Yvan Fréchette: That was me, Mr. Perron.

As I said earlier, we need an expedited procedure for obtaining vaccines that are available elsewhere. However, it's also possible to develop vaccines based on strains that exist in our region, whether it be Ontario, western Canada or the Maritimes. The disease isn't always linked to the same strains. Take influenza, for example. Children in Quebec may be infected by a strain of the virus that isn't present in British Columbia.

The regulations of the Canadian Food Inspection Agency permit the use of autovaccines, but they're complicated and restrictive. I understand that something has to be done that doesn't cause health problems, but we could facilitate matters in that regard. We've managed to start a project, but it's hard because we have to abide by the agency's rules. Mr. Bertinotti could tell you a little more about that.

● (2000)

Mr. Raphael Bertinotti: We're conducting an influenza vaccine marketing project, but the regulations prevent us from using certain new technologies that you referred to, such as those related to messenger RNA vaccines. At any event, they complicate the use of those vaccines.

In addition, a bacterium from Asia is currently posing a threat, and we need to develop a vaccine for it, but no one wants to market it because there isn't really any volume. It would cost \$1.2 million just to get agency authorization to market production of 25,000 doses on an emergency basis. We agree that it's very difficult to come up with that kind of money, but it would be extremely important to have that vaccine bank in the event a crisis arises in some of our facilities.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Johns, you have the floor for two and a half minutes.

[*English*]

Mr. Gord Johns: Mr. Roy, we were just finishing the last round, and we talked about the threat of wild populations to farm pork. You talked earlier about your relationship with Natural Resources Canada, as well as with Parks Canada.

Can you elaborate a bit on what's going on in terms of that conversation, and give us an update?

Mr. René Roy: Yes. First, I would like to highlight the fact that if the disease enters into the wild pig population, it becomes really hard to eradicate it. We become a pool of the disease. This is why

we have to make sure that we eradicate the invasive species before the disease enters in any way. It would be so detrimental.

Second, in terms of our relationship, because these invasive species are everywhere, it goes into various jurisdictions: Parks Canada, the provincial level, and our indigenous communities. It's important that everybody is working together. So far, it has been treated as a threat for the health of animals, but in fact wild pigs are an invasive species. We need the government to take the lead on this and treat them as an invasive species.

Mr. Gord Johns: You stated that it's been improving. What more needs to be done? How far is the government toward where it needs to get to?

Mr. René Roy: There is really good work done, for example, in Ontario, where they have almost eradicated the wild pig population. Now, we have pockets—especially in the west—where it's really important that everybody is working. What we would need is not only to have the status—it's recognized that wild pigs are an invasive species—but to have them treated as an invasive species. Right now, the government doesn't have the leadership to take them as an invasive species, apply the resources and treat them.

The Chair: That pretty much puts us at time. Thank you, Mr. Johns.

On behalf of the committee, let me thank all our witnesses for taking the time this evening. I apologize for the bit of a delay. Thank you for joining us in person or, indeed, for tuning in and participating virtually. Thank you so much for your collective work in agriculture and for helping to inform our really important study.

Colleagues, that ends round number one. We'll take a very brief pause. We're going to get right back into it, because we have to do round two and just a little work shortly thereafter.

Please, don't go far. Thank you.

We'll suspend.

● (2000)

(Pause)

● (2005)

The Chair: Colleagues, we're going to get back at it.

Welcome to the second panel of our study on animal biosecurity preparedness. We have three more great witnesses lined up.

First of all, from the Canadian Cattle Association, in the room, we have Matt Bowman, co-chair of the animal health and care committee. Mr. Bowman, thank you for taking the time to be here.

Online, we have Dr. Leigh Rosengren, chief veterinary officer. Thank you for joining us. I heard earlier, I think, you're from Saskatchewan. You were talking about getting cattle out into the field, so I look forward to hearing some of your testimony tonight.

From the Canadian Veterinary Medical Association, we have Dr. Trevor Lawson, incoming president. Mr. Lawson is a Nova Scotian and works at a veterinary firm in my riding of Kings—Hants, so it's good to see a fellow Bluenoser.

● (2010)

[*Translation*]

Lastly, from the Union des producteurs agricoles, we have Paul Doyon, senior vice-president general, and Guylain Charron, agricultural research and policy advisor, agronomy.

[*English*]

Each group will have five minutes for opening remarks.

I'm going to start with the Canadian Cattle Association, with Mr. Bowman or Ms. Rosengren.

Mr. Matt Bowman (Co-Chair, Animal Health and Care Committee, Canadian Cattle Association): Thank you, Mr. Chair and honourable members. It's great to be here tonight.

My name is Matt Bowman, and I appreciate the opportunity to come today to represent the Canadian Cattle Association and our 60,000 beef producers across the country. I am the co-chair of the animal health and care committee, along with Mr. Miles Wovk from Alberta. I am also joined today virtually by Dr. Leigh Rosengren, our chief veterinary officer.

Let me start by emphasizing the animal health and care essential to our daily work as cattle producers. Our sustainability depends on the health of our herd. We have world-class high standards presently in place and are striving for continual improvement. Ensuring animal health means protecting the animals from day-to-day diseases while preparing for emergencies, disasters and foreign animal diseases.

Given the study before the committee, my remarks will focus on the activities and priorities of the beef industry, targeted at improving preparedness for foot-and-mouth disease, and there are three reasons for this.

First of all, FMD is among the most contagious viruses for cattle in the world.

Second, FMD affects all cloven hoof species, so we work closely with our other commodity partners to ensure that our preparedness can be as effective as possible.

Finally, FMD is present in 70% of the world's livestock, so an incursion is a real threat to Canadian production. Any detection of FMD would result in complete and full border closure to all international trade of live animals and meat products until Canada could eliminate the disease and regain its FMD-free status.

The beef sector has invested heavily in FMD preparedness, including surveillance, traceability and biosecurity. With respect to traceability, the beef sector identifies all cattle with an individual animal identification number. This allows traceability of the animals throughout their life in Canada. CFIA currently has an open consultation on its traceability regulations, and CCA is actively preparing its comments on those regulations.

Biosecurity includes all practices that prevent or mitigate disease from entering, spreading within, or being released from a farm or ranch. As FMD is a reportable disease, the activities of the Canada Border Services Agency and our import permit procedures are critical in ensuring that FMD does not enter Canada from other countries.

Farm and ranch level biosecurity looks different in the beef industry than in other livestock sectors. Other commodities have indoor production that provides the opportunity for layers of biosecurity at the farm gate or at the barn door. Many cattle operations have neither of these, so our processes look much different; however, we have a robust system that is delivered through the verified beef production plus program. VBP+ is a voluntary industry and producer-led initiative to proactively mitigate risk through producer training and certification. Training encompasses producer preparedness and documentation requirements to validate implementation. The third party certification verifies practices in place and confirms documentation completion.

In addition, the Beef Cattle Research Council is central to ensuring that recommended best practices are science based and clearly communicated to the industry.

These initiatives cost the beef industry stakeholders over \$12.4 million to achieve. Our sector has estimated an additional \$15.9 million in initial investment and \$2.3 million in ongoing costs associated with the pending traceability recommendations.

The beef sector's ongoing investment to prevent disease incursion and spread demonstrates our commitment to emergency preparedness. It provides an excellent basis for the government to leverage investment in foreign animal disease prevention and response.

We all have a role to play in biosecurity, and I must point out the unintended consequences of CFIA's transport regulations that came into effect in 2022. We are concerned that they are creating more of a biosecurity risk, and I will be more than happy to elaborate more on this in the Q and A session.

Given the importance of today's discussion, I must close by thanking the government for its investment in budget 2023 for the FMD vaccine bank. This is a critical component of our preparedness plan, and we are anxious to see it established, with robust plans for its deployment, if necessary.

We look forward to continuing to work with federal and provincial governments along with other industries, including Animal Health Canada, on our various roles and responsibilities to adequately prepare for a foreign disease outbreak.

We recognize the link between animal health, human health and mental health, and we are taking a one-health, one-welfare approach to biosecurity.

• (2015)

This is evergreen work for our sector as we continually develop and improve our repertoire of risk management and preventative practices that provide a foundation for healthy herds, healthy producers and healthy balance sheets.

We look forward to more discussion today.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Bowman.

We'll turn to Dr. Lawson for up to five minutes, please.

Dr. Trevor Lawson (President-Elect, Canadian Veterinary Medical Association): Good evening, everyone, and thank you for the invitation to join you here this evening.

My name is Dr. Trevor Lawson. I'm a large animal practising veterinarian in Nova Scotia, and I am the president-elect of the Canadian Veterinary Medical Association.

As an organization that represents the national and international voices of Canada's veterinarians, the CVMA represents over 25,000 veterinarians and registered veterinary technicians throughout the country. The CVMA advocates on behalf of the profession with our strategic priorities including animal welfare, national issues, and the balanced and supported lives and careers of veterinarians. As a national organization, the CVMA is comprised of elected delegates from all provinces, veterinary colleges, students and registered veterinary technologists, and it speaks as a national voice for veterinarians through means like our science-informed position statements developed by our largely volunteer committees, and the tools and resources we develop to help support and sustain our core competencies.

One of the key areas the CVMA remains focused on is antimicrobial use in animals. The CVMA takes seriously the risk of antimicrobial resistance and has been advocating for prudent antimicrobial use and stewardship in animals for over 30 years. Further to this effort, we developed, with guidance from an array of stakeholder groups, SAVI, or the stewardship of antimicrobials by veterinarians initiative.

SAVI is a four-year project funded by Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada that concluded in March of this year. This project has engaged Canadian veterinary experts in developing CVMA veterinary antimicrobial use guidelines to support informed decision-making by veterinarians on prudent antimicrobial use in eight species groups of animals. SAVI has also supported the development of a prototype for electronic prescription data collection and of a reporting system involving selected food-animal practices in Canada.

In November 2021, in partnership with experts from the University of Calgary, SAVI launched the Firstline app, an efficient on-farm application, so veterinarians have ready access to the guidelines. The SAVI team has worked closely with the veterinary colleges in Ontario and Quebec to make the Firstline app accessible to

all veterinary students as well—our new generation of animal health experts.

The CVMA hopes to secure new funding to build on the significant accomplishments under SAVI and to further improve decision support for veterinarians on prudent antimicrobial use in animals.

Veterinarians in private practice, industry and government play an integral role in early detection and management of foreign animal and zoonotic diseases, and in helping to ensure food safety and security for all Canadians. They work closely with livestock producers to promote and maintain biosecurity on thousands of farms from coast to coast.

Further to this, CVMA is pleased to have collaborated on many projects, and it continues to participate in committees and advisory groups with colleagues in the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, the Public Health Agency of Canada, Health Canada and, as previously mentioned, the AAFC. To cite one example, the CVMA has been actively involved with CFIA over a number of years in communicating guidance for practising veterinarians on disease threats such as African swine fever, which we've discussed to some extent already, and avian influenza, which I think everyone is aware is a significant and current problem.

In order to continue to provide these valuable services to veterinarians and to protect Canadians and our animal industries, we must ensure that there is a robust veterinary workforce to meet these demands. Unfortunately, the profession in Canada and most other countries is facing a workforce shortage that has been exacerbated by the recent pandemic. The number of veterinary professionals leaving the workforce, either through retirement or as a result of burnout, currently outpaces the number of graduates from our five national veterinary schools.

We applaud the work of several of our provincial counterparts in securing funding to help increase the seat count for training new veterinarians in Canada, and we hope to work more closely with the federal government as well to secure additional funding, including for infrastructure, to continue this trend of growing and training more veterinarians here at home.

We also look forward to our continuing partnership with Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada to help Canadians and Canadian employers navigate the immigration process to recruit foreign-trained veterinarians, and perhaps to simplify and accelerate the process, to allow these much-needed, highly trained professionals to enter the Canadian workforce as expeditiously as possible.

• (2020)

I would be remiss if I did not mention the toll the increased workload has had on the veterinary team. The stressors that veterinary professionals face are many, and the added burden of significantly longer days without respite has impacted the mental health and well-being of many of our colleagues. We have increased our attention on, and resources for, this very important area, but there is ever more to be done.

Thank you, again, for allowing the Canadian Veterinary Medical Association the opportunity to speak tonight. I look forward to your questions and further discussion.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Lawson.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Doyon, you have the floor for five minutes.

Mr. Paul Doyon (senior vice-president general, Union des producteurs agricoles): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

My name is Paul Doyon, and I am senior vice-president general of the Union des producteurs agricoles, or UPA. I am a dairy and maple syrup producer.

I am here today with Guylain Charron, the UPA's agricultural research and policy advisor.

Animal biosecurity is important for both the health and well-being of animals and because of the major economic and trade consequences associated with animal diseases.

According to the Équipe québécoise de contrôle des maladies avicoles, for EQCMA, the avian flu outbreaks in 2022 and 2023 cost the Canadian government more than \$180 million and, to date, have resulted in the loss of more than 7.6 million birds.

The Équipe québécoise de santé porcine has informed us of a recent study from the University of Iowa in which the impact of the outbreak of African swine fever was estimated at \$7.5 billion and the combined outbreak of African swine fever and foot-and-mouth disease in the pork and beef sectors in the United States at \$23 billion.

Biosecurity measures are thus essential to protection from disease outbreaks throughout the chain of production, from producer to consumer. This means that agricultural input suppliers, livestock transporters, slaughterhouses, processors and renderers all have a role to play in animal biosecurity.

The various farming sectors have developed tools including biosecurity measures, which they apply to protect the health of their animals. Many of those measures have been developed based on national standards and the biosecurity principles of the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, the CFIA. The codes of practice developed by the National Farm Animal Care Council for the care and handling of animals are also used by our affiliated groups and establish requirements and recommendations for biosecurity on the farm or refer to the CFIA's national standards.

For example, the beef and dairy sectors are working jointly to establish a biosecurity strategy for the entire beef industry. Their objective is to design and implement a biosecurity action plan including all industry players. They also have a certification program including on-farm biosecurity criteria.

Poultry sector groups have mandatory biosecurity requirements in their respective safety programs. They are applying biosecurity protocols and an emergency plan developed by EQCMA.

Les Éleveurs de porcs du Québec has prepared biosecurity training material and an emergency measures plan in preparation for an African swine fever outbreak. They are cooperating on a project be-

ing conducted by the Centre de développement du porc du Québec on improving biosecurity in hog transportation.

Traceability is an important tool that complements animal biosecurity. When an animal disease outbreak occurs, it helps reduce intervention time and mitigates economic, environmental and social impacts. Traceability is mandatory in Quebec for cattle, bison, deer, sheep and pigs.

The purpose of the consultation on the Health of Animals Regulations is to improve the present traceability rules by correcting a number of deficiencies, in particular, by adding goats to the list, reducing the time period for reporting information, requiring that a site identification number be obtained and requiring that movements from departure facilities to destination facilities be reported.

The World Organisation for Animal Health Issued a report in 2017 on its evaluation of veterinary services in Canada, highlighting the collaborative work done by the EPA, the CFIA and Quebec's department of agriculture. The report noted the efficiency of our communications, particularly those of our producer associations that are very active in sending messages concerning animal health and the promotion of biosecurity.

The government must provide the agricultural sector with the necessary support to optimize animal biosecurity. To that end, it must increase scientific assistance and funding to sectoral initiatives in order to establish a herd health and buyer security strategy. It must include cleaning and disinfection costs in the emergency costs covered by the CFIA, as the World Organisation for Animal Health has recommended in its report. It must facilitate vaccine development and access to vaccination programs and protocols for sectors seeking to adopt this approach. Lastly, it must tighten up buyer security controls at the borders by, for example, increasing fines imposed on offenders.

• (2025)

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Doyon.

[*English*]

Now we'll have our questions.

Colleagues, I am going to ask, for the first round, that we do five minutes. For the second round, I would ask the major parties to be in and around four minutes. I'll give some discretion to the NDP and the Bloc. If they could ask one-minute questions with one-minute responses.... We're a bit pressed for time. We have a lot of work, and it's been a long night.

Mr. Barlow, am I going to start with you or Mr. Steinley?

Mr. Steinley, you have five minutes, my friend.

Mr. Warren Steinley: Thank you, Mr. Chair, thank you to our presenters this evening.

How have regulatory changes, such as the transport regulations or Transport Canada's electronic logging device mandate, affected animal health and biosecurity? I'll ask Mr. Bowman this question, because I think there have been a lot of reports of animal transportation's being much more strenuous on the animals now because of the ELDs, as they're known in the business. I'd just like to get some comments on that and on how, maybe, this was not quite thought out when it came to the idea of transporting animals. Across the country, there aren't that many places where you can unload and reload animals safely. I grew up on a farm, so I know that the most stress animals go through is when they're being loaded and unloaded, so I'd just like to get some comments on the record.

Also, have you had any conversations with the minister about ELDs, and has she talked to the transport minister?

Mr. Matt Bowman: I will answer the last part first. Yes, the minister is well aware, as is the Minister of Transport. They're aware of our concerns on how we've been dealing with this.

I talked about the unintended consequences of the ELDs. Basically, the cattle's time in transport does not line up with the trucker-driver time, and that's where the conflict arises. How we mitigate that problem is our concern right now.

Mr. Warren Steinley: I think that's where it falls into being one of those ideas where it might have been good in theory, but in practice, due to the distance the animals have to be transported.... Is that where the biggest issue lies, then? Would I be correct in saying that?

Mr. Matt Bowman: I would say that. Part of it comes from the idea of.... We were looking to Europe's model for some of the basis of the regulations to begin with. You can cover a lot of Europe by the time you get from here to Thunder Bay.

Mr. Warren Steinley: Would I be right in saying that the industry, the business and your 60,000 beef producers think we should be more in line with the American transportation regulations than with the European ones?

• (2030)

Mr. Matt Bowman: They are our major competitor. We export a lot of livestock to the United States, so to align our transport regulations with theirs would go a long way to help where we are.

Leigh, do you want to add anything to that?

Dr. Leigh Rosengren (Chief Veterinary Officer, Canadian Cattle Association): We have two concerns. One of the main concerns with the humane transportation regulations is the shortened duration that livestock can be transported. The concern is that there's no scientific evidence that it improves the welfare of the cattle to have this shortened duration. It sounds good in theory, but we can't scientifically show any evidence that it's improving it.

Unfortunately, what we can show is that the rest stops.... We have cattle commingling that otherwise wouldn't have contact with each other, which is creating a theoretical risk and a real biosecurity risk. The theoretical risk would arise with an emergency like a foot-and-mouth disease. We'd have more animals in contact with each other. The real risk is that we actually can show an increase in endemic pathogens in those animals that have been through the commingled sites.

That's our primary concern with the humane transport regulations. I can speak about the ELDs if there's time.

Mr. Warren Steinley: I have one quick question when it comes to FMD, Leigh. Don't worry; I didn't forget about you. I was getting there.

You mentioned upcoming traceability regulations. Could you elaborate on how you expect they could affect Canada's FMD preparedness?

Dr. Leigh Rosengren: Certainly.

The beef industry is strongly supportive of the concept of increased traceability. It's an important pillar in our prevention, along with surveillance and biosecurity for preparing for foreign animal disease.

We have concerns about the feasibility of implementation in the field right now with the available technology. We also have some substantial concerns with regard to the relative cost benefit for what it's going to cost to implement these regulations. Overall, we're supportive of the approach, and we're appreciative of the CFIA's sticking with the cattle implementation plan, which is an industry-designed plan.

Thank you.

Mr. Warren Steinley: I have one more quick question for you, because I have to keep it tight: If the provinces are a little slower on the uptake for the vaccine bank, do you have confirmation from the minister and CFIA that they will go ahead with that vaccine bank with or without the provinces?

Dr. Leigh Rosengren: I think we have confidence that an aspect of the vaccine bank will go ahead. We're always looking for provincial engagement, but there's lots of room in different aspects of emergency preparedness for that to happen.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Dr. Rosengren and Mr. Steinley.

We'll now turn to Ms. Taylor Roy.

Ms. Leah Taylor Roy (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you to all the witnesses for being here this evening. I'll be sharing my time with Ms. Valdez, who's joining us virtually.

I'd like to start with my questions with Mr. Lawson.

One question I'm curious about is the increasing occurrence of zoonotic diseases and any correlation that you see with extreme climate events. There's been a lot of talk about that. On your website you advocate for all medical professionals to work together in the spirit of "one health" for people and animals. Could you elaborate a bit on this? Do you have any thoughts around how that is intersecting and how it might affect biosecurity preparedness?

Dr. Trevor Lawson: That's a great question. As we know, as an impact of climate change, weather patterns are different now from what they were even in the recent past. One thing we're noticing in many jurisdictions is that storms are larger and cover larger swaths. As such, they can move endemic diseases much more easily.

We should all be aware, obviously, coming out of a pandemic, of the reality that diseases do not know borders. We're certainly seeing an impact here in Canada with avian influenza. It's something that no longer has a seasonal reality to it, or at least not in the last few years. That is consistent with what we're seeing in North America and Europe.

I think there is a connection there, and veterinarians are very much determined to be part of the solution. A number of veterinary colleges have begun to develop and institute programs that are focused on one health and on a very collaborative approach with human health care professionals. We very much see that as the path going forward in the future.

Ms. Leah Taylor Roy: That's great. Thank you.

I have one more quick question before I turn it over to Ms. Valdez. You talked about the antimicrobial use guidelines. I'm wondering how the increased use of antibiotics in agriculture, especially in livestock, has affected the ability to actually fight some of the diseases you're seeing. Could you comment on that?

• (2035)

Dr. Trevor Lawson: Yes. I think that's a good question.

What we are concerned about is the loss of effectiveness with antimicrobial resistance over time. We see that phenomenon in the veterinary world as well as in the human world. We have seen in the last number of years significantly fewer options available within the Canadian landscape for essential medications to treat livestock. That's a challenge on its own. I think a few others here this evening have touched on that.

The ultimate goal with this technology and with having this app at the fingertips of veterinary care providers is that we can make the most prudent and up-to-date decisions on which antimicrobials to use for given conditions. Obviously, technology becomes of real benefit in even a very rural setting in food animal production, where the most up-to-date version of the app would be available and hopefully allow our members and veterinarians across Canada to make the best decisions possible to reduce the risk of antimicrobial resistance over time.

Ms. Leah Taylor Roy: Thank you very much.

I'll pass it over to Ms. Valdez.

The Chair: Ms. Valdez, you have 90 seconds.

Mrs. Rechie Valdez (Mississauga—Streetsville, Lib.): Thank you, Leah, and thank you, Mr. Chair.

Dr. Lawson, I'll go back to you. Congrats on your app launch, by the way.

You described microbials in your opening, and the lack of labour availability for veterinarians. What other recommendations can you provide the committee to address the veterinarian labour shortage that we have?

Dr. Trevor Lawson: That's a wonderful question.

The two areas that we're most focused on in the short to medium term are through the immigration pathways, to try to have employers in Canada gain access to appropriately qualified international candidates. We've been working with the federal refugee and citizenship department to help do that.

The other thing we've been doing is that we've been advocating with our provincial partners for the provinces to increase funding to veterinary school seats. Obviously, that's not an immediate fix. That will take time, because it takes time to increase the seat count and turn out new, young and capable veterinarians to provide the service.

Those would be two of the priority pathways, but we've often likened it to this: If we don't plug the hole in the bucket, so to speak, and find ways to retain the veterinarians we currently have in practice, to have their careers be more fulfilling, and to have them stay longer in the practice of veterinary medicine, then it becomes a very challenging situation. We've also been very focused on working with some researchers at OVC in Ontario in trying to determine what best practices and best workplaces look like, to be able to offer our members better opportunity for career fulfillment and hopefully long, satisfying and valued careers.

Mrs. Rechie Valdez: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you very much to you both.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Perron, you have the floor for five minutes.

Mr. Yves Perron: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thanks to the witnesses for being with us this evening.

I will try to be brief.

Mr. Bowman, earlier you said you were pleased with the announcement made in the 2023 budget that a foot-and-mouth vaccine bank will be created.

Has there been any news on that subject? Announced projects often take time to materialize.

Have you received any news from the government that things are moving forward and that the tool is being put into place?

[*English*]

Mr. Matt Bowman: I will refer that question to Dr. Rosengren to clarify.

Dr. Leigh Rosengren: Thank you very much.

We know that the CFIA is actively working on establishing the vaccine bank and looking at the realities. I am actually involved in a working group that is looking at the logistics of the deployment of the vaccine. There are many aspects that need to be addressed before we have the vaccine bank fully established.

The other good news is that when we were in Paris last week at the WOAH meetings, they announced that they reaffirmed their vaccine-sharing arrangement with the United States, New Zealand, Australia and the United Kingdom. Our increased bank will give us a stronger footing in that sharing arrangement. It also secures our doses in the meantime.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Perron: Thank you very much. I apologize for interrupting, but we're running short on time.

Mr. Doyon, you said we should invest in prevention and traceability. Earlier Mr. Roy emphasized that it's important to have permanent funding outside the political cycle. That would enable industry sectors to prepare appropriately thanks to an effective and rapid traceability system.

Do you think that's a good idea? Would you recommend it too?

Mr. Paul Doyon: Yes, I absolutely agree with that.

What Mr. Roy said earlier is exactly what we think as well.

Mr. Yves Perron: I'd like to hear your remarks on zoning and compartmentalization, which Mr. Bertinotti told us about earlier. Do you think that's a good idea in case of infection? Do you think it's realistic to negotiate that with our American partner, for example?

● (2040)

Mr. Paul Doyon: It should definitely be included in the negotiations we should have with our neighbouring countries. However, I'm certain that, for reasons this important, there would be a way to negotiate something.

Mr. Yves Perron: Earlier Mr. Fréchette discussed the difficulty involved in dealing with physical paperwork rather than a digital application. I imagine you agree with that.

Do you think that's a good idea? Do you have a specific recommendation for us to improve preparations for diseases?

Mr. Paul Doyon: I'm going to let Mr. Charron answer you in greater detail. Yes, what Mr. Fréchette said was excellent. We're living in the digital era. Having to move paper documents from place to place complicates matters and increases the risk of errors.

Mr. Guylain Charron (Agricultural Research and Policy Advisor, Agronomy, Union des producteurs agricoles): Just as the pork sector people said earlier, we need longer-term investments to improve the animal health issue. There also has to be predictability and the possibility to bring other sectors together if the investments are made. That's the first point to consider.

Second, it's still important that the industry and government agencies work together so that each party clearly understands the realities of the others.

Mr. Yves Perron: Don't you have a more specific recommendation for us?

Mr. Guylain Charron: For the moment, I'd say that mainly concerns the specialized sectors that work more directly with government organizations. We're here in support of our groups.

Mr. Yves Perron: Thank you very much, Mr. Doyon and Mr. Charron.

Mr. Bowman, I know you created the certification associated with the verified beef production plus program, the VBP+ program.

Would you please tell us how that can be useful?

Beef producers have told this committee many times that they want to withdraw the bovine spongiform encephalopathy standard so they can increase their productivity. Is that feasible in a context in which we're trying to prevent other diseases?

Mr. Paul Doyon: We're definitely wondering how to keep our country biosecure in the context of our trade agreements with other countries. It's always a bit complicated, but, as I said earlier, when it comes to matters of health, we should overlook trade issues and pool all our efforts.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Doyon and Mr. Perron.

Mr. Johns, you have the floor for five minutes.

[*English*]

Mr. Gord Johns: Thank you so much.

Thank you, witnesses, for your important testimony.

I'm going to go back to May 3, 2023, and the testimony to the committee from Dr. Mary Jane Ireland, Canada's chief veterinary officer. She explained that veterinarians play an important role in ensuring animal, environmental and human health.

I think that actually one of the most important people in my life was my late uncle, Larry Bryant. He was a veterinarian. He worked in Spruce View, just outside of Red Deer, and Nobleford, just outside of Lethbridge. He was tireless in the number of hours he put in and the compassion and care he brought to his field, to the animals, and especially to the farmers by always being there. He graduated back in 1952 from UBC, and then later went to Guelph to finish up his doctorate.

This just gives me a chance also to thank all veterinarians for the important work they do and the sacrifices they make here in Canada. I think we owe them a ton of gratitude.

It will be four years at the end of June since we lost my Uncle Larry. It's nice to be able to honour him. My late uncle was just an incredible pillar in our family. He really showed us compassion and thoughtfulness.

I'm going to go to you, Mr. Lawson.

Dr. Ireland also noted that Canada, like many countries, is experiencing a shortage of veterinarians in both private practice and public health units. In its 2020 report on this subject, the Canadian Veterinary Medical Association recommended an annual growth of 3.5% to 4% in veterinarians.

Can you talk about what, in your opinion, the causes of the shortage are? I know you started down this thread, and I want to continue this conversation and pose some questions to you.

• (2045)

Dr. Trevor Lawson: I can, certainly. I'd be happy to.

I think there are many factors. Without question, if we think back over the last 25 years, we've had a population expansion and economic expansion in Canada. However, our veterinary colleges have remained essentially at the status quo in terms of the number of seats we've been graduating on an annual basis. As a result, we've not really been able to get ahead of the curve in terms of meeting the new demand.

We did the workforce study in 2020, which showed that there was a structural deficit in the number of new veterinarians we were going to be graduating. What we didn't account for at that time, obviously, was a global pandemic. It clearly has exacerbated the situation. What we are seeing now, as we're turning out the same number of new graduate veterinarians, is that we're just treading water or losing ground on an annual basis.

This becomes a real challenge. It creates work places for veterinarians, whether they're in small rural practices or they serve in food animal or companion animal production or in any other sector. It's much more challenging, I think, to find the career as rewarding as it once was—as you described it being for your uncle. That's certainly something that hits home for me.

I think in the big picture we understand that the structural deficit exists. It's going to exist over the course of the next 10 years at a minimum. We have an opportunity to take steps to increase funding to veterinary colleges to increase the number of seats to produce homegrown Canadian veterinarians. We have an opportunity to discuss new admissions requirements for veterinary schools and how we can serve all of society in a better way. That's in the companion animal sector, but also the food animal sector, which is something that is near and dear to my heart. It's something that touches close to home.

I understand how very stretched the rural regions in Canada are and have been for some time. I think Dr. Rosengren can certainly speak to that as well. That's not a new phenomenon. It's something we've been very aware of for the last 25 years.

Mr. Gord Johns: We need to remove barriers. Obviously as New Democrats we pushed hard to stop the interest on student loans and to increase grants to people who are studying. I know that's important.

Given that veterinary training and accreditation are provincial competencies, can you speak about the role the federal government can play in addressing the shortage, in addition to what I just mentioned?

Dr. Trevor Lawson: One of the pathways we've been exploring most closely is the partnership we have developed with Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada to try to remove any potential barriers. It is very important that the eligible candidates find a pathway that can most easily bring them to Canada if they choose to be here. That is going to be an ongoing work stream for us over

the next year or so. We'll continue to have dialogue. I think we've made good progress in that regard.

I think hiring internationally is quite a challenge for just about any company or business. Veterinary medicine has the added layer of being a regulated profession that comes with very high standards. We have to be aware of that. I think there are ways in which we can work through that.

The Chair: We'll leave it at that, gentlemen.

Thank you.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Lehoux, you have the floor for four minutes.

Mr. Richard Lehoux: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thanks to the witnesses for being here today.

Mr. Doyon, you discussed the regulations respecting the handling of animals in your opening statement. We know that the more you handle animals and transport them over long distances, the more you risk having them contract various diseases. In the present circumstances, animals will have to be transported over longer distances: cattle, since slaughterhouses are increasingly removed from Quebec, and pigs, considering the announced closure of certain slaughterhouses in the region.

Should we reorient or reduce regulations on the handling of animals?

If you had a recommendation to make to the committee, Mr. Doyon, what would it be?

Mr. Paul Doyon: First of all, we should rely on the animal health and welfare experts. We have to choose the model, the procedure that will present the least possible risk for the animals. Earlier some people said it wasn't good to unload animals in areas where they could be contaminated. If it's preferable to transport them over longer distances, that's what we'll do. However, if it's preferable to take breaks and to take them to certain places, we'll adopt that solution. It's the experts who will select the most appropriate method.

• (2050)

Mr. Richard Lehoux: Thank you.

We should, of course, rely on the experts. I entirely agree with you. However, who will make the decision? That's a major problem now.

Do you have a specific recommendation to make?

Mr. Paul Doyon: Sometimes you have to be careful when it comes to regulations. You have to consider whether that's the best way to achieve the desired objective.

Mr. Richard Lehoux: Thank you, Mr. Doyon and Mr. Barlow.

[*English*]

Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Lehoux.

Gord, I'm glad that your uncle was a veterinarian.

We are not very supportive of Bill C-275, not having the public go on protesting on farms to protect their biosecurity.

The Chair: I'm going to stop you, Mr. Barlow. I'll stop the clock. There was an issue with your microphone. It wasn't on. I don't know why, but it is now.

Mr. John Barlow: Okay.

To Mr. Bowman, or Leigh for that matter, we heard from CFIA last week, when they were talking about avian influenza, that CFIA is not prepared to handle multiple outbreaks of an animal-borne virus at the same time, whether that's avian flu, foot-and-mouth disease or African swine fever. What is your opinion on that and the preparedness of CFIA to handle one pandemic, let alone if two outbreaks were to happen at the same time?

Mr. Matt Bowman: Back at our annual meeting, we had a representative from CFIA present to us. They said that dealing with avian influenza had been all they wanted to handle at that point in time. If there were another outbreak that was to happen, they would be under duress trying to cover all the bases of another outbreak.

Mr. John Barlow: Now, to go from CFIA to CBSA, what more can border services do to understand the urgency and be more prepared for, again, an outbreak or the spread of an animal-borne virus?

Mr. Matt Bowman: My suggestion would be zero tolerance, which they're at now, but the fines need to be more forceful. I look to Australia, where it's nothing to have a \$100,000 fine for having some sausage in your suitcase. You get a few of those fines out there and that certainly deters people from thinking they could sneak some stuff in.

To maintain the zero-tolerance policy and have some severe penalties for breaking the law, that's where they need to be.

Mr. John Barlow: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Barlow, and thank you, Mr. Bowman.

We'll now turn to Ms. Khalid for up to four minutes.

Ms. Iqra Khalid (Mississauga—Erin Mills, Lib.): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to the witnesses for your presentations.

Dr. Lawson, perhaps I'll continue with a line of questioning that my colleagues have asked you.

Now, I don't think the challenge is attracting veterinarians into Canada. I think the challenge is whether they're going to find jobs here with the strict regulations for getting their licences. Perhaps I'll ask you, sir, how your association is willing to work to ensure that people who are, indeed, coming to Canada to pursue these opportunities are actually going to be able to get their licence and practise?

Dr. Trevor Lawson: The CVMA, through the national examining board, which is an arm's-length organization that oversees the licensing of veterinarians in Canada, has been very active in this regard. We've worked very closely with testing sites at the Western College of Veterinary Medicine, which does all the in-clinic testing for graduates who are from abroad.

From speaking with the college, on paper, it may look at times like there's a backlog, but when there's a call to take the exam, not all candidates reply in the positive. There are systems in place, and they appear to be working well. Often, what's happening is that when there is a call for testing, there are not enough candidates to put the testing on, because it takes a certain group to do it at a time.

We've also started to explore more closely a pathway to limited licensure. We have a consultant working on this at this point in time, whom we've co-funded this year with the registrar group in Canada that oversees licensing in the provinces. That is something we're going to continue to work on. That will be coming forward throughout 2023.

That is something that should, hopefully, allow entry to someone with specific skill sets. For example, if there are cattle practitioners in a different country and they wanted to come to Canada, it should allow us to ask, do they have the skill set to work with cattle, and can we license them here in a limited way? We're not asking them to do something they have not done in 20 years, for example, with cats or horses.

We're exploring those opportunities. I think they show good potential, and we're certainly committed to working in that regard.

• (2055)

Ms. Iqra Khalid: Thank you very much, Dr. Lawson. I look forward to seeing how that plays out.

My question is for Mr. Bowman, and Mr. Doyon, perhaps I'll ask you as well. I grew up in England during the mad cow epidemic in 1998. In Canada, it was detected in 2003. In these past 20 years, how has the industry changed to detect and protect from BSE? How are the regulations impacting the industry?

Mr. Matt Bowman: First of all, there was the feed ban. When the outbreak occurred, we were no longer allowed to feed animal by-products back to ruminants. That was the first stage. Since then, there were different regulations in the slaughtering facilities that changed the amount of material that could be used. They were just being extra cautious on what they could and couldn't use.

Dr. Rosengren, did you want to elaborate a bit on the technical side?

Dr. Leigh Rosengren: Certainly. Matt touched on the feed ban, but he was also referring to the specified risk materials in the slaughterhouses. That's what we're working on right now in order to harmonize with the United States. We've had a very effective system. The prevalence of BSE, globally, is virtually zero. We're looking for a balanced approach that mitigates any potential of human risk while ensuring competitiveness and effectiveness in our production system.

The Chair: That brings us to time.

Thank you so much.

We'll now go to Monsieur Perron.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Perron, you have the floor for about two minutes, and then Mr. Johns will have the same.

Mr. Yves Perron: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Bowman, I'm going to pick up where I left off earlier. I'd like you to tell us about your VBP+ verification program. Please tell us about it and about how it can help prevent diseases from spreading?

[*English*]

Mr. Matt Bowman: Part of the verified beef program is a producer training program. There are modules in there that deal specifically with biosecurity. They develop and teach best practices for biosecurity. At this point, the majority of producers in Canada have been trained on these practices. If we're going to slow down the spread of a disease, producers are trained on what they need to do to slow it down, or to stop the spread of a disease at this point in time.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Perron: Thank you very much.

What about the standard for bovine spongiform encephalopathy that you just discussed with Ms. Khalid?

Considering the negligible risk the disease presents in Canada, you still want to go back to the previous standard and to be allowed to promote these parts.

Do you think we could reach an agreement with the United States under which we could harmonize the standard?

[*English*]

Mr. Matt Bowman: We'll never get back to where we were, but we are in a better place than we were as far as controlling the disease if there were another outbreak. I think that moving toward harmonized regulations with our trading partners is where we'll end up.

The point right now is that we want to make sure our trading partners will accept any changes we make to the regulations we want to propose. There is no point in changing the regulations if our trading partners aren't going to accept the changes we make, so we want to make sure they are acceptable.

If we can harmonize with the United States, that makes the trade across the border a whole lot easier—if everything is the same.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: That's great.

Thank you, Mr. Bowman and Mr. Perron.

Mr. Johns, go ahead for two minutes.

[*English*]

Mr. Gord Johns: Thank you again to all the witnesses for the important testimony.

Mr. Bowman, Animal Health Canada is a new organization. Can you tell us how you see it addressing gaps in our current preparedness?

You have about two minutes to answer and maybe add anything you weren't able to speak to today here in committee.

• (2100)

Mr. Matt Bowman: I will refer that to Dr. Rosengren.

Dr. Leigh Rosengren: I'm so glad you ended the committee on that positive note. We are very excited to be working with Animal Health Canada. CCA is a strong, supporting partner.

It was raised earlier whether CFIA had the capacity to deal with multiple outbreaks or large national outbreaks. It is going to be through the collaboration at the Animal Health Canada table with the federal government, the provincial governments and all the commodities that we are going to solve these very challenging problems.

We're looking forward to the establishment of a new emergency management division, where most of this work will take place.

Thank you.

Mr. Gord Johns: Do you want to speak a bit more on some of your hopes in terms of addressing the gaps? Maybe you have a little more about where you're hoping you'll see some of that.

Dr. Leigh Rosengren: Certainly. From a beef-specific point, certainly we need more preparedness plans and response plans for foot-and-mouth disease. We need to look at our biosecurity protocols and see where there are gaps, do the science and then do the training and the extension through industry.

Dr. Lawson mentioned antimicrobial use and resistance. That falls under the purview of Animal Health Canada. It has a "one health" banner, so it really looks at all of these issues. We had climate change raised today. That would fall under Animal Health Canada. There is the mental health and welfare of producers. There are so many aspects on which we can collaborate and really find strong solutions through this new organization.

The Chair: Thank you very much to you both.

Just quickly, Mr. Steinley raised the prospect of the ELDs—electronic logging devices.

I wanted to ask you, Dr. Rosengren or Mr. Bowman, because I've been working with the National Cattle Feeders' Association to try to engage with the Ministry of Transport on this. There seems to be the goal from the National Cattle Feeders' Association to provide additional guidance or perhaps a policy statement that adverse conditions or security of the load would include situations where animal welfare is at risk. In some of the conversations with officials at Transport Canada, they seemed to suggest that there's enough regulatory provision in that right now.

Do you have any comment? You talked about the health of animal transport regulations writ large, and that's well heard, but on the ELD specifically, does CCA have a position?

Dr. Leigh Rosengren: We do. Our position is exactly the same as that of the National Cattle Feeders' Association.

What we need is the enforcement, which occurs at the provincial level, to be well understood. Animal welfare would fall under the guidance that allows drivers to make decisions in an emergency situation. We're not asking for an exemption under normal loads, but in situations in which the health or welfare of the animal is impaired by following the hours of service regulation, we're asking that provincial enforcement be well aware that it is the guidance of Transport Canada.

The Chair: Just quickly, has that message been heeded thus far, or is there still some work to be done to make sure that position is being articulated?

Dr. Leigh Rosengren: We continue to repeat it to anybody who will listen.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

On behalf of all the committee, I'd like to thank all our witnesses for taking the time this evening, for your collective work in agriculture and for helping to inform our study. We are going to release you. Enjoy your Monday night.

Colleagues, unfortunately we have just a little more work to do. We're going to go in camera, so please, for those who are online, the quicker you can get in, the quicker we can get this done. We've been delayed, and I won't keep you any longer than I have to.

Thank you to the witnesses.

We will adjourn our public meeting, and we'll see you in our private meeting.

[Proceedings continue in camera]

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