

EMERGENCY LIVESTOCK REMOVAL

- WHEREAS:** Maintaining livestock health, viability and profitability during emergency situations such as, but not limited to, disease, fire and flooding is a major priority to livestock producers;
- WHEREAS:** Livestock removal during emergency situations pose major challenges to producers' safety, livelihoods and animal welfare;
- WHEREAS:** Major challenges arise from transportation, acquiring pasture and red tape from various departments to access grazing reserves;
- WHEREAS:** These major challenges restrict the ability of these producers to evacuate rapidly and pose serious risk to life and property;
- WHEREAS:** Removal of red tape and rapid access to grazing reserves and/or created areas allotted for the use during emergency situations would improve the evacuation process, protect life and property;
- WHEREAS:** Currently Municipal Affairs and Agriculture and Forestry do not coordinate an effort to make livestock removal a priority under the Emergency Management Act in rural areas;
- WHEREAS:** The purpose of an Agricultural Service Board is to improve the economic welfare and safety of producers and by not having a provincial streamlined system to safely and effectively remove and rehome livestock; emergency situations will continue to plague the life and property of producers;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED

THAT ALBERTA'S AGRICULTURAL SERVICE BOARD REQUEST

that Municipal Affairs, Agriculture and Forestry and Environment and Parks—Public Lands work together to improve access and provide all necessary resources to create separate allotments at grazing reserves and/or other created sites designated for livestock during emergency management situations and recognize livestock removal as an important part in the Emergency Management Act.

FURTHER THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED

THAT ALBERTA'S AGRICULTURAL SERVICE BOARD REQUEST

that Municipal Affairs and Agriculture and Forestry work together to research and develop best practice procedures in the event livestock are to be left behind due to an Evacuation Order issued under the Emergency Management Act.

Sponsored by: County of Northern Lights

Moved by: _____

Seconded by: _____

Carried: _____

Defeated: _____

Status: Provincial

Department: _____

BACKGROUND

In May of 2019 we saw widespread fires and emergency situations erupt throughout Northern Alberta. One of many fires was the Battle Complex Fire (PWF 052), which led to an evacuation of the Northern half of the County of Northern Lights. It became apparent that the removal of livestock and willingness of livestock producers to leave would become a major challenge to emergency management staff at the County of Northern Lights as the County is not equipped to provide assistance in removal of livestock to increase the likelihood of producers evacuating.

Two reoccurring themes emerged from producers.

1. "Where could I even move my livestock if I wanted too?"
2. "I can't remove my livestock, what is the best practices if I have to leave them and get out?"

It would remove a major hurdle to livestock producers if it was public knowledge that they had a place to rehome livestock during emergencies, if they chose. The initiation of sound research and development of standard operating procedures regarding what to do if you cannot remove the livestock would reduce the stress for producers and first responders in the event of an evacuation.

Dealing with the immediate threat of the fire, the staff realized there was little they could do to help and few resources to offer in this situation other than reaching out to intermunicipal contacts and Alberta Environment and Parks to find pasture or reserves with space to rehome livestock. If areas were designated for emergency use provincially and producers were aware of these sites, they would act before immediate threat to life and property was posed. This would not only be beneficial to producers but also the brave emergency responders that work tirelessly to keep our community safe. Livestock producers who are under immediate threat of evacuation must be given viable options for their animals if we expect them to evacuate, by addressing this threat to life and property it allows emergency responders to perform their jobs more effectively and does not create another hazard of livestock running loose.

The County of Northern Lights would like to thank all the emergency responders that risked their lives to save our community. We would also like to thank all the volunteers for their time, resources and trucks to rehome livestock of affected producers. It's families like these that help to build strong, robust and vibrant communities but provincially we shouldn't have to rely solely on great volunteers. A structured and targeted Inter-Ministerial Provincial Plan on how to respond during an Agricultural Emergency needs to be created. That is why we need to make Emergency Livestock Removal a priority and provide the necessary funding and areas required to protect life and property.