



FOR RELEASE
November 6, 2013

Yukon government putting modern animal health measures in place

WHITEHORSE—Bill 62, the *Animal Health Act*, was tabled in the Yukon Legislative Assembly today. It modernizes the existing act so that the Government of Yukon can respond effectively to the full range of animal health risks and the impacts they have on human health.

"The new act will help government protect livestock and wildlife health, support local food security and help safeguard human health," Minister of Environment Currie Dixon said. "It reflects the input received from the public review held earlier this year and supports existing farming practices and processes."

The new act differs from the current one in that it:

- Ensures orders for quarantine, surveillance and control are science-based and clearly communicated to individuals;
- Modernizes the tools to manage hazards to animal health; and
- Provides for compensation to animal owners in the event of losses, and introduces an appeal process.

"We heard clearly through the public review that animal health decisions need to be made on the basis of science," Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources Scott Kent said. "The new act gives government the tools and authority to deal with hazards to animal health."

The new act reflects public input that all animals are valued by Yukoners, and that livestock have emotional as well as economic value to farmers. It ensures when actions must be taken to control disease, owners are given fair notice and the actions are fully justified.

The *Animal Health Act* will continue to complement the federal responsibility for animal health carried out by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency. The new act offers a wide range of penalties and provides flexible options for the courts to tailor the penalty to the severity of the offense and the personal circumstances of the individual.

For more information about Bill 62, the *Animal Health Act*, and to view the summary of the public review visit www.env.gov.yk.ca/animalhealth.

-30-

See backgrounder below.

Contact:

Elaine Schiman
Cabinet Communications
867-633-7961
elaine.schiman@gov.yk.ca

Nancy Campbell
Communications, Environment

867-456-6794
nancy.campbell@gov.yk.ca

Catherine Young
Communications, Energy, Mines and Resources
867-667-3005
catherine.young@gov.yk.ca

Backgrounder

Bill 62, the *Animal Health Act*

The current *Animal Health Act* came into force in 1997. The legislation is shared between the Department of Environment and the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources (Agriculture Branch).

In response to Yukon's growing agricultural sector and the need to better respond to emerging animal health issues, the government established the Animal Health Unit in 2010, along with the position of Chief Veterinary Officer (CVO). The CVO provides advice to the Chief Medical Officer of Health and the Department of Health and Social Services on issues of food safety and diseases transmitted between animals and humans.

A public review took place in April/May 2013 that garnered 80 responses to proposed changes addressing the scope of the act, the role of the CVO, compensation (not present in the current act), appeals and penalties.

Key changes

The scope of the new act **goes beyond disease** to address hazards, such as risks to human health arising from toxins in meat or bacteria in milk. It also expands the definition of "animal" to include hazards from dead stock as well as live animals.

The new act introduces the option of **compensation**, which the current act does not allow. A compensation program acknowledges that decisions made to protect the public will have an economic impact on individuals; therefore, it is more likely that owners will report a hazard if they know they will be financially compensated and have a right to appeal.

The new act introduces **three tools for managing hazards**: quarantine orders, surveillance orders and control orders. (The current act only has quarantine areas where strict measures are applied to eliminate a hazard.) A surveillance order allows for monitoring in the area adjacent to a quarantine area to detect or prevent spread of a hazard. A control order can apply to all or part of Yukon and allows for restrictions to prevent the spread of hazards, e.g. banning the import of species in the deer family (cervids) to prevent the introduction of Chronic Wasting Disease.

The new act clarifies the role and authority of the CVO and inspectors and the requirements for them to justify any orders that are issued. It allows for owners to request a review of orders and outlines how permits will be issued. It does not alter existing livestock production practices, but offers flexibility in how a wide range of hazards will be controlled.

The potential offenses are clearly outlined in the new act and while the upper limits to fines have been substantially increased to align with other Canadian jurisdictions, a wide range of penalty options have been included that focus on preventing violations or offenses, rather than simply punishing individuals.

Regulations

The new act sets out 20 areas where the minister could make regulations, such as defining a “hazard” or prescribing a “reportable hazard”. The new act is intended to take effect immediately, once given assent, with regulations to follow over time, as needed.

The criteria for the protection of information are specified and agreements for sharing information will be developed, including those with First Nations in the event an animal health hazard involves settlement lands.

News Release #13-281



Stay up to date with the latest Yukon government news by subscribing to our RSS feed here: <http://www.gov.yk.ca/news/rss.html>. Or follow us on Twitter @yukongov.