

Keystone Agricultural Producers



# Bill 31

## The Animal Diseases Amendment Act

**June 5, 2006**

**Presented by:**

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*The Voice of Manitoba Farmers*

On behalf of Keystone Agricultural Producers (KAP), I am pleased to share our organization's position with respect to Bill 31 – The Animal Diseases Amendment Act. KAP is a democratically controlled general farm policy organization representing and promoting the interest of thousands of agricultural producers in Manitoba. Our membership consists of farmers and commodity groups throughout the province, and our organization is proud to act as the voice of Manitoba farmers.

A foreign animal disease outbreak in Manitoba would have critical, immediate, and long-lasting impacts on our agricultural industry. While we wish that it would never happen, we must realistically plan for such an event to manage and mitigate the impacts on the farm community, the economy and environment, and also on the health and welfare of the affected farm animals. KAP commends the provincial government for continuing to plan and prepare for these scenarios via necessary legislative change and other actions.

As farmers, we put the highest priority on the health and well-being of our animals. While it is always difficult to destroy animals, especially those that are healthy, we understand and support the need to do so in the event quarantine restrictions following a foreign animal disease outbreak. We are also in favour of the proposed amendments that allow for increased and more stringent inspection of vehicles that are transporting animals. We believe that these controls will help to manage the flow of animals in the case of an outbreak and assist the entire industry in its eventual recovery.

There is, however, one issue that has not been addressed in this amendment and we strongly believe that its absence must be corrected. The provisions for animals euthanised due to welfare concerns owing to animal movement restrictions or premise quarantine orders contain no reference to compensation that a livestock farmer should receive as a result, and this is a serious oversight.

The individual producer - and the industry as a whole - will no doubt already be suffering from extreme financial hardship as a result of any disease outbreak. We believe that government may only be compounding these challenges by not clearly specifying that farmers must be compensated for any animals that must be destroyed under these circumstances.

KAP encourages government to amend this bill to specifically reference compensation, and commit to working with farmers and farm organizations in the development of a process that identifies the criteria for a fair level of compensation. It is essential that farmers who will already be dealing with the challenges of disease containment, border closures, and an immediate decline in income must not also have to deal with another loss when their animals are destroyed due to welfare concerns. We encourage government to take this opportunity to further amend Bill 31 to protect producers' significant investment in their farm animals and to help ensure the stability of Manitoba's livestock sector.

Thank you.