

**RESOLUTION E3-23**  
**SUPPORTING A VIBRANT CERVID INDUSTRY IN ALBERTA**

**WHEREAS** even though the value of cervid carcasses, velvet and exports has remained strong, the number of animals, their movement within Alberta and the use of provincial slaughter facilities has dramatically declined since 2005;

**WHEREAS** Alberta Elk Commission has identified that cervid farmers are disproportionately and negatively impacted by current federal programs and regulatory processes, and that the industry which had a value of over \$13 million in sales in 2021 is in crisis;

**WHEREAS** successful regulations and processes for protecting human health and preventing the spread of prion diseases already exist for cattle and sheep, and chronic wasting disease poses no more threat than scrapie in sheep or BSE in cattle;

**WHEREAS** the current regulatory process is resulting in farmers having to actively participate in the needless slaughter of their healthy animals causing unnecessary mental health trauma and distress;

**THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED**  
**THAT ALBERTA'S AGRICULTURAL SERVICE BOARDS REQUEST**

That the minister of Agriculture and Irrigation support the requests of the Alberta Elk Commission to reduce regulatory burden and bring the legislation and regulatory processes in line with other livestock.

**SPONSORED BY:** County of Northern Lights

**CARRIED**

**STATUS:** Provincial

**DEPARTMENT:** Agriculture and Irrigation

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

We believe echoing our support for the changes requested by the Elk Commission during November meetings with Alberta Agriculture and Irrigation could be vital to maintain forward movement on the issue, for this reason we believe it meets the criteria as emergent. It is imperative the ASB's use their platform and established relationship with the Province of

Alberta to champion the voice of this small but important cervid industry, so they don't remain forgotten, facing unfair over regulation and the exhaustible mental health burden not felt in other livestock industries to the same extent.

July 2022 the AgKnow initiative gave a brief description of work they were doing at the Spring Fling event hosted by Results Driven Agriculture Research (RDAR) in Calgary. As a result members of the Alberta Elk Commission connected with them to highlight the crisis that Chronic Wasting Disease programs are having on their industry and the impact it is having on their farmers. Farmers were interviewed and found to be under intense pressure and distress having, in their mind needlessly kill healthy animals to follow rules of programs that trigger CFIA mass euthanasia activities. The activities of the CFIA go further to try to put permanent caveats against their property making their infrastructure worthless and in some cases making it extremely difficult to sell. Farmers in Alberta and Saskatchewan are having to resort to court action to receive compensation that they previously qualified for. The industry is effectively at a standstill and they feel will not survive without swift action to reduce regulations and bring the industry inline with other livestock who also have prion type diseases (Scrapie in Sheep, and BSE in Cattle).

CWD is considered not a risk to human health and so it is felt that the extensive regulations and current response is not practical or reasonable.

[Chronic Wasting Disease - Public Health, Alberta.ca](#)

In 2020, only 12 of the 1903 cervids from farms tested for CWD had a non-negative result. In other words less than 1% of all the cervids brought for slaughter or slaughtered by CFIA order were actually positive for CWD. ([Mandatory Chronic Wasting Disease Surveillance Program, Alberta.ca](#))

Since 2005 the value of Elk and other cervids for their velvet, meat and live animals has not decreased, however the industry continues to shrink.

[Elk Industry Overview](#), Alberta Elk Commission Convention 2022, Jayson Galbraith Phd.

The Elk and whitetail industries are significant contributors to local rural economies but are much smaller and have less influence than other livestock industries. AgKnow suggested that the Elk Commission consider connecting with a ASB program to get a resolution through the ASB process to support them in their efforts. In November 2022, the ASBPC learned about the situation and brought it to the attention of the Deputy Minister, Assistant Deputy Minister and the Minister. At the same time the Elk Commission delivered a letter to the Minister with specific requested changes to the current legislation, regulations and programs that would help to rectify the situation.

After meeting with the ASBPC in early November the ADM and DM met with the Elk Commission and they continue to engage with them to see what can be done to rectify the situation and

reopen the industry. It should be noted that this issue is only in Western Canada that volunteered to test every animal for CWD. Eastern Canadian farms don't test and so continue to have CWD free status. Western Canadian farms are disproportionately impacted by the current Federal programs, and the commission is looking for Provincial support to reverse this issue. One Elk farmer talked about having to personally shoot, handle and dispose of 600 hundred of his animals. The slaughter, testing and disposal took over a week of 8 hour days and he continues to experience distress. The CWD tests have not yet come back.

Another farmer reported that only 2 tests came back non-negative (likely had CWD) out of the 500 animals that they slaughtered, none of which could be salvaged for meat, even though CWD does not pose a threat to human health.

Research on mass depopulations shows that mental health impacts are more severe when the farmers have a hand in the slaughter and feel that healthy animals are being needlessly slaughtered. Both of those circumstances exist currently for Cervid farmers in western Canada.

This resolution is to provide added support to the industry and their requests to reduce the regulatory barriers and opt out of the current program that is triggering severe CFIA depopulation responses.

#### Changes Requested by the Elk Commission:

- Make the regulatory changes under the Livestock Industry Diversification Act to allow Cervid Harvest Preserves
- Discontinue the 'Scorched Earth Policy' implemented under the Chief Provincial Veterinarian authority in relation to the CWD program
- Decrease the 100% mandatory head testing program
- Discontinue the use of 'Endemic' in export letters for imports, unfair labelling
- Discontinue the Herd Certificate Program Level Status as it is impeding the ability to buy, sell and trade animals
- Relax the authority of the Chief Provincial Veterinarian to stop movement of live animals back onto farms that been cleared of CWD by CFIA
- Allow live Export Trade
- Support or lead a CWD vaccination Program
- Provide support to the industry through positive promotion, being trade orientated not restrictive, tourism through harvest preserves, technical and staff support
- Create a fair Export/trade Program using:
  - 100% animal audit
  - Equal testing, similar to BSE
  - Continue using standard testing for Tuberculosis and Brucellosis
  - Use a CWD live test on export animals, ear punch tissue test
  - Allow On Farm Slaughter, similar to bison and beef