



LONG-TERM THINKING FOR TODAY'S ISSUES

May 2, 2022

Hon. Lisa Thompson, MPP
Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs
77 Grenville St.
11th Floor
Toronto, ON
M7A 1B3
Delivered via email: minister.omafra@ontario.ca;

Re: Support for Small Ruminant Ultrasound Pregnancy Assessment Training and Certification Program

Dear Hon. Minister Thompson,

The Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario (CFFO) is an Accredited Farm Organization representing the interests of over 4,000 farm families in Ontario who are called to the vocation of farming. CFFO policy promotes economically, socially, and environmentally sustainable farming, advocating that farmers receive fair return for their production and stewardship efforts.

We are writing to indicate our support for Canada's Small Ruminant Ultrasound Pregnancy Assessment Training and Certification Program.

In light of the ongoing shortage of large animal veterinarians, which is especially acute in some regions of the province, the CFFO sees continued value in the current practice of having independent certified technicians provide this service to farmers with small ruminant animals. The current independent certified technicians have proven to be highly skilled and effective at delivering this non-invasive scanning and are trusted by the farmers they serve.

The proposed Small Ruminant Ultrasound Pregnancy Assessment Training and Certification Program will ensure that new technicians are properly trained and evaluated to ensure they meet and maintain the requirements to be certified. We are pleased that the proposed program will offer two streams, one for training for those intending to do their own on-farm assessments and one for certified operators. We also support the grievance process to ensure quality service and fair opportunity for operators to maintain their certified status.

We strongly support the inclusion of both theory and practical training for certified operators, including an apprenticeship. Learning directly from those with experience in the field is highly valuable for ensuring quality service to farmers.

Independent certified technicians are best able to serve the small ruminant farming community for several reasons. Because they specialize in this service alone, they have greater experience and expertise in this particular area, ensuring accurate information for farmers. Because they are able to make efficient use of the costly equipment required, they are able to provide quality service to a broader region at lower cost. Lower costs will ensure this service is broadly and consistently available to small ruminant farmers, which is good for animal health, farm profitability and industry growth and sustainability.

Large animal veterinarians provide essential animal care for farmers, but are already strained to meet the needs of the industry across the province. Requiring large animal veterinarians to provide this service will burden them with significant costs to acquire the necessary equipment, and will restrict access to this service for many who already have limited access to a large animal veterinarian. We see it as a benefit for both farmers and large animal veterinarians to have this ultrasound service for small ruminants provided by independent certified technicians.

We request that the Ministry support this industry-led initiative which will ensure quality ultrasound service at reasonable costs for small ruminant farmers across Ontario.

Sincerely,



Ed Scharringa, President

Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario

cc: Lorie Gold, President, Jan Robinson CEO, College of Veterinarians of Ontario
Allan Ribbink, Chair, Canadian Sheep Federation
Jost am Rhyn, CEO, Canadian Veterinary Medical Association
John Hemsted, Chair, Ontario Sheep Farmers
Murray Lewis, President, Ontario Goat
Rob Goodwill, Chair, Gay Lea Foods Co-operative Ltd.
Rene Zoller, Chair, Ontario Dairy Goat Co-operative Inc.