

BC Cattlemen's Association

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit in March, the BC Cattlemen's Association (BCCA), like all industry associations, had to quickly adapt to a new way of getting the work done and adjust many of our regular events. The BCCA Board of Directors began to meet virtually (despite connectivity challenges) while staff worked from home. In June, BCCA held their Annual General Meeting via Zoom and we celebrated our 2020 Ranch Sustainability Award recipient in a special virtual event. Instead of our annual Research Forum, BCCA embarked on a short video highlighting research relevant to BC's cattle industry. The Board was able to meet once face-to-face in October before the second wave hit and new restrictions were put in place. The in-person meeting scheduled for December was quickly modified to a virtual meeting.



Throughout 2020, BCCA worked on the issues related to COVID-19 and we continued to address the regulations impacting producers. During the early months of the pandemic, we collaborated with our national groups and worked provincially to ensure governments and policymakers were aware of the unique challenges facing the industry's stakeholders during COVID-19. At the same time, BCCA continued to address BC ranchers ongoing challenges such as access to water and forage and urge the Province to strengthen trespass laws. Equally as important, we worked to capitalize on the opportunities to build a stronger industry in BC.

On the operational side, BCCA reevaluated our standing committees and began a phased approach to merging two of our existing committees (Livestock Industry Protection and Research) into the new Beef Production and Innovation Committee. In October after Board approval, the committee began to operate under the new name and 2021 will see the first elections for the committee.

2020 also saw a provincial election in October that resulted in a majority government for the BC NDP. In late November, Premier Horgan announced his new cabinet appointing several new ministers to key positions. Work is underway to prepare for bringing our concerns and solutions to the ministers in the new year.

Key Issues

As mentioned, BCCA continued to address challenges facing the industry including:

Water

BCCA has spent a decade consulting with the Province as the government makes changes to the Water Sustainability Act and related regulations. Livestock water regulations are the latest to be reviewed and the Province publicly released their proposal in July. BCCA was able to see some positives such as the acknowledgement of traditional livestock use, agreement to issue First in Time, First in Right (FITFIR) dates for traditional use, and the recognition that livestock can directly access surface water sources. However, we also have strong concerns with mandatory licensing, the lack of clear protections for livestock watering during times of scarcity, and the three-tiered system that would see cattle operations of 200+ head undergo a more extensive application process. We have asked the Province consider a risk-based approach to licensing that would only require mandatory licensing in areas where water is in short supply.

Water Storage

For several years, BCCA members have raised concerns about the increasing costs of dam maintenance and the regulatory burden placed on dam owners through the Dam Safety Regulations. This year, BCCA partnered with Ducks Unlimited Canada to make a submission to the Ministries of Agriculture, Environment and Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development to highlight concerns and provide recommendations. The 17 recommendations focused on addressing concerns around the increasing costs of infrastructure, dam maintenance/monitoring and archeological assessments, addressing downstream and consequence risk, and improving government support and communication.

Trespass

Like many other livestock commodities in BC and across Canada, trespass has been an ongoing concern for members for years but became more urgent in 2019 with the increased incidents of trespass by activists. In 2020, members brought forward a resolution that asked BCCA to



urge the Province to adopt a bill similar to Alberta's Bill 27 Trespass Statute. BCCA has collaborated with other provincial livestock organizations to advocate for changes to the Trespass Act and work towards finding a solution to trespass on agricultural operations. Some of the recommendations that have been put forward are to urge the Solicitor General to increase the fines and the speed at which charges are laid to mirror that of Alberta and Ontario, to have those successfully fined to also hold criminal records preventing cross border travel and to utilize a special Crown Counsel to handle trespass cases to improve continuity. We have also asked the Ministry of Agriculture to find ways to expedite changes to the Trespass statute.

Agriculture Land Reserve

In BC, the rules around the Agriculture Land Reserve (ALR) have seen many iterations as governments change. From the membership, there is a broad diversity of rancher's perspectives on the Agricultural Land Reserve and Commission. However, the common ground is the need to protect the producer, not just the land, and ensure that agriculture is profitable. This year, BCCA has made two comprehensive submissions to the Province with recommendations towards providing supports for ranchers and farmers that make a real difference in their financial viability and to address regulatory burden ranchers face. We will continue to deliver the message that the best way to protect agricultural land is with financially viable farms and ranches.

Opportunities

While 2020 had many challenges, there were also opportunities for BC's cattle industry.

BC Beef Producers Inc.

While work on marketing a branded BC beef product had been underway for several years, 2020 was the year to see the concept become reality. In March, the opportunity to lease an existing processing facility in Westwold, BC spurred the project forward. The Beef Producers

Inc. (BCBP), a producer-owned limited liability corporation, was created to get BC beef to BC consumers, under the trademarked brand of "Genuine BC Beef". Since October, BCBP has been actively selling hook shares and at the end of November the first cows were processed. The motivation behind creating BCBP is to offer BC cattle producers the opportunity to participate in any profits from the efficiencies of processing cows locally and in selling the products as a branded product, "Genuine BC Beef".

Targeted Grazing for Wildfire Prevention

This program, announced in May 2018 with funding from the Province, is using cattle as a tool to manage fine fuels around communities with the aim of lowering fire intensity and creating a fire break close to vulnerable communities. The program garnered media attention this year as the project got underway in three communities. BCCA is working closely with the Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development, regional districts, municipalities, forest companies and First Nations. Further funding for a research program to support data collection and research on the pilot projects has been received.

Indigenous Relations and Affairs

BCCA has been monitoring the treaty process for decades with a willing seller/willing buyer approach to treaty negotiations and land selection. This remains the position of the Association. Understanding that only Indigenous and Provincial governments will be at the main treaty negotiation tables, the BCCA Indigenous Affairs Committee has been urging the Province to create side-table discussions where affected stakeholders can stay informed and ask questions. This process is being adopted with the Wet'suwet'en treaty negotiation and BCCA has been invited to put a representative forward to sit on the stakeholder council.

Recently, the BC Cattlemen's Association, through the Indigenous Relations Committee, is working toward building meaningful relationships with Indigenous communities. Our efforts to create a clearer understanding of reconciliation and UNDRIP are focused at the grassroots level. To that end, we are striving to gain a better understanding of our role in reconciliation and forging a path forward based on common values and respect.

In closing, BCCA appreciates the commitment and hard work of all the CCA directors and staff. We would like to thank our hard-working CCA Directors Grant Huffman and Ryan Scorgie.

For more information, please visit the BCCA website at www.cattlemen.bc.ca

Kevin Boon
General Manager

