



# County of Stettler No. 6

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August 22, 2024

Honourable RJ Sigurdson  
Minister of Agriculture and Irrigation  
131 Alberta Legislature Building  
10800 – 97 Avenue  
Edmonton, AB T5K 2B6

Honourable Nate Horner, MLA for Drumheller-Stettler  
Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board  
208 Alberta Legislature Building  
10800 - 97 Avenue NW  
Edmonton, AB T5K 2B6

Dear Minister Sigurdson and Minister Horner,

**RE: County of Stettler Letter of Support for AgKnow**

The County of Stettler No. 6 Agricultural Services Board is writing to express our full support for the AgKnow program, echoing the sentiments shared by Wheatland County, Saddle Hills County, and the County of Vermillion River from earlier this year. This initiative was highlighted at the 2019 Provincial Agricultural Service Board Conference through Resolution E1-19: Access to Agriculture Specific Mental Health Resources, and a similar resolution E2-23 on Stable Funding for Farm Mental Health was passed in 2023. However, securing consistent funding for this program remains an ongoing challenge.

In our County, and across the province, agriculture is not just a profession but a way of life. Currently the perception of agricultural producers as resilient, often exacerbates the mental health stigma within our community. The demand for mental health support in agriculture is a growing concern.

The AgKnow program by the Alberta Farm Mental Health Network is committed to addressing the mental health needs of our agricultural producers. It provides vital resources and access to professional mental health support tailored to the industry's unique challenges. Providing participants with the opportunity to consult with professionals connected to agriculture is crucial for fostering engagement and positive results. Sustaining stable funding is essential to preserve these vital services, particularly in rural regions.

We cannot emphasize enough how important it is the Provincial government maintain its support for the AgKnow program and secure consistent funding to support the mental health and well-being of our agricultural producers.

Sincerely,

COUNTY OF STETTLER AGRICULTURAL SERVICES BOARD

~~SEVERED~~

Les Stulberg, CHAIR

~~SEVERED~~

Larry Clarke, Board Member

~~SEVERED~~

Ernie Gendre, Board Member

~~SEVERED~~

Dave Grover, Board Member

~~SEVERED~~

Paul McKay, Board Member

~~SEVERED~~

James Nibourg, Board Member

~~SEVERED~~

Justin Stevens, Board Member

cc:

Dan Williams, Minister of Mental Health and Addiction

Linda Hunt, AgKnow Program Director

The Association of Alberta Agricultural Fieldmen (AAAF)

Agricultural Service Board Provincial Committee (ASBPC)



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September 11, 2024

Honourable RJ Sigurdson  
Minister of Agriculture and Irrigation  
131 Alberta Legislature Building  
10800 – 97 Avenue  
Edmonton, AB T5K 2B6

Honourable Nate Horner, MLA for Drumheller-Stettler  
Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board  
208 Alberta Legislature Building  
10800 - 97 Avenue NW  
Edmonton, AB T5K 2B6

Dear Minister Sigurdson and Minister Horner,

## **RE: Strengthening Regulation to Address Wild Boar Farming**

The County of Stettler No. 6 would like to commend Alberta Agriculture and Irrigation for their unified approach to agriculture through Agricultural Service Boards and for leading effective campaigns including "Squeal on Pigs" and "Clean, Drain, Dry." We take pride in Alberta's reputation as an innovator in agriculture, and appreciate the strong support the provincial government provides to our industry.

However, we believe the Province of Alberta has fallen short in its implementation of the Agricultural Pest Act (APA) and its related legislation concerning wild boar.

The County of Stettler No. 6 Agricultural Service Board acknowledges your response to Resolution 5-24 from the 2024 Provincial Agricultural Service Board Conference, specifically regarding the enforcement capabilities under the current APA and the Pest and Nuisance Control Regulation, with particular focus on the Minimum Containment Standards for Wild Boar Farms (2015). While we recognize the enforcement mechanisms outlined, we remain deeply concerned about significant gaps and limitations within the current legislation.

The current APA does not provide inspectors with proactive tools for enforcing wild boar farming operations, relying instead on reactive measures only after wild boars have escaped. This approach fails to adequately address the severe risks that improper containment poses to agriculture, the environment, and the economy. To illustrate the magnitude of these risks, consider that in the United States in 2007, there were an estimated 5 million feral pigs, with crop damages and control costs

amounting to approximately \$300 per pig annually. This resulted in at least \$1.5 billion in damages and control costs nationwide (Pimentel, 2007). While similar estimates are not available for Canada, the potential impact on Alberta's agriculture could be equally devastating. Additionally, the biosecurity risk is immense—an outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease could lead to an immediate shutdown of all Alberta pork and beef exports, with a nationwide cost of \$65 billion (Gillies, 2018).

The ability to effectively enforce the Minimum Containment Standards for Alberta Wild Boar Farms (2015) under Section 5(2) of the APA—requiring landowners to take active measures to prevent the establishment of pests—is essential for the proactive management of wild boar farming operations. However, since compliance with these standards is currently voluntary and Alberta pork producers raising wild boar as livestock are not mandated to adhere to them, enforcement remains inconsistent and insufficient. The lack of authority to impose penalties for non-compliance with these Minimum Containment Standards weakens efforts to ensure that these farms operate safely and securely.

Furthermore, our legislation lags behind other provinces in addressing this pest. On July 1, 2024, the Government of Saskatchewan enacted the Animal Production Act, which regulates wild boar farming. Under this act, wild boar farms in Saskatchewan are required to meet regulatory requirements, including annual inspections, fencing standards, escape reporting, and record-keeping. Acknowledging the significant risks associated with wild boar farming, Saskatchewan has also implemented a moratorium on new wild boar farms, effective January 1, 2025. This legislation underscores Saskatchewan's commitment to mitigating the environmental and agricultural risks posed by wild boar, setting a standard that Alberta should consider following.

In Alberta, wild boar farming is regulated under the Agricultural Operation Practices Act (AOPA), which is delivered by the Natural Resources Conservation Board (NRCB). This legislation focuses on the manure management and expansion of confined feeding operations, and for wild boar no explicit containment measures are listed. Wild boar farming operations are only subject to AOPA conditions if they are larger than 100 feeders or 50 sows (farrowing) (AOPA – Schedule 2 Agricultural Operations, Part 2 Matters Regulation), leaving smaller wild boar farms effectively unregulated by legislation. The annual inspections of wild boar farms and adherence to Alberta Agriculture and Irrigation's Compliance Principles are positive practices, yet they fall short without concrete legislative support. A fully-backed framework, similar to Saskatchewan's Animal Production Act, is crucial to ensure wild boar farming in Alberta is conducted in an environmentally sustainable and economically viable manner.

We also recognize wild boar present unique challenges as they are considered livestock when contained within a fence but become a pest once they escape. This dual status has led to a reliance on local regulations, with 22 of 69 municipalities enacting bylaws to prohibit wild boar farming within their jurisdictions. Despite this, the volume of local legislation has not prompted adequate concern or revisions to wild boar farming practices as part of the December 7, 2023 review of the APA.

Given these concerns, we urge the Provincial government to take the following actions:

**Strengthen the Agricultural Pests Act:** Explicitly include the Minimum Containment Standards for Wild Boar Farms within the Agricultural Pests Act or the Pest and Nuisance Control Regulation, ensuring non-compliance is considered an offence subject to penalties under Section 23.

**Introduce Licensing and Regulation:** Establish a licensing and regulatory framework for wild boar farms, regardless of size, to ensure consistent and enforceable standards across Alberta.

Thank you for your consideration and continued work towards ensuring Alberta Agriculture is innovative, effective and sustainable for the future.

Sincerely,

*SEVERED*

Les Stulberg  
CHAIR, COUNTY OF STETTLER AGRICULTURAL SERVICES BOARD

**CC**

Dale Nally, Minister of Service Alberta and Red Tape Reduction

Ric McIver, Minister of Municipal Affairs

Heather Sweet, Opposition Critic for Agriculture, Forestry & Rural Economic Development

Laura Friend, Manager, Natural Resources Conservation Board

Brenda Knight, Chair, Agricultural Service Board Provincial Committee (ASBPC)

Aaron Van Beers, President, The Association of Alberta Agricultural Fieldmen (AAAF)

Laura Poile, Secretary, The Association of Alberta Agricultural Fieldmen (AAAF)

References:

Pimentel, David. "Environmental and economic costs of vertebrate species invasions into the United States." *Managing Vertebrate Invasive Species*, vol. 38, 2007.

Gillies, M. "Modernizing Canada's foot and mouth disease response plan." *Canadian Veterinary Journal*, vol. 59, no. 8, 2018, pp. 899-902.



September 4, 2024

Minister of Agriculture and Irrigation  
131 Legislature Building  
108000 – 97 Avenue  
Edmonton, AB T5K 2B6

**RE: Funding for Agriculture and Agricultural Service Boards**

Dear Honorable Minister RJ Sigurdson:

The Kneehill County Agricultural Service Board Members would like to draw your attention to a matter of concern for our municipality and all Agricultural Service Boards across the province.

Agriculture remains a consistently vital part of Alberta's economy, and as global pressures to improve efficiencies increase, so will the need for widely available, unbiased resources and expert consultations. While provincial agricultural departments and resources have been reduced in past years, municipalities have often had to step in and continue to provide resources and assistance for provincial services. Municipal Agricultural Service Boards across the province, including in Kneehill County, work tirelessly to uphold and administer provincial agricultural legislation while contributing to the sustainability and growth of the agriculture sector through extension programming and resources.

Provincial funding under the ASB Legislative and Resource Management Grants is critical for delivering Kneehill County ASB services and programming, and we greatly appreciated the increase in funding provided for 2023 and 2024. As the costs of delivering these services continue to rise, adequate provincial funding support is crucial to municipalities.

Looking forward to a new grant cycle in 2025, we are earnestly awaiting news of what changes will come with the new agreement. As municipalities operate on a calendar-year financial cycle, it is imperative that we have access to information on funding sources as early as September in order to finalize our budgets and make determinations on services, programming, and projects prior to the end of the year and the start of a new budget cycle in January.

As of today, we have received no official information from Alberta Agriculture and Irrigation on the new ASB grant agreements, the amended grant requirements, or the funding amounts that will be available. We, therefore, request that your government provide municipalities with a detailed update on the 2025 grant agreements, including service and program requirements and funding amounts, so that we may budget accordingly and continue our vital agricultural services uninterrupted.

Sincerely,

**SEVERED**

*Councillor Wade Christie, ASB Chair, Kneehill County*

CC: Assistant Deputy Minister John Conrad  
Alberta Agriculture and Irrigation Manager of Agriculture Service Boards Kerriane Koehler-Munro  
Alberta Association of Agricultural Fieldmen  
Agricultural Service Board Provincial Committee



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