Ontario government proposes trespass bill to protect farmers, animals and food supply


Dairy Farmers of Ontario (DFO) welcomes the proposed bill for its anticipated benefits to the Ontario dairy industry, DFO’s partners and others in the agriculture industry. If the bill is passed, it will better protect farmers, their animals, livestock transporters and Ontario consumers.

“To Dairy Farmers of Ontario, this is an important step by Minister Hardeman and OMAFRA to protect the integrity of our food system,” says Murray Sherk, DFO’s board chair. “Dairy farmers want Canadians to have confidence in our high-quality, locally produced foods, including milk produced in Ontario. We appreciate the proposed bill as a response to our concerns about increased on-farm trespassing and the associated health and safety risks.”

The proposed bill reduces the likelihood of trespassing on farms and processing facilities by creating greater deterrents for trespassers and establishing and enforcing farmer’s rights and animal protection zones. Explicit prior consent would be required to access animal areas on farms. Stricter enforcement on trespassing would help reduce the risks of exposing farm animals to stress and disease and improve existing biosecurity measures to reduce contaminants introduced into the food supply.

In recent months, the Ontario government received hundreds of letters about trespassing on farms and agri-food premises and obstruction of livestock transport trucks, and more than 30 Ontario municipalities have passed or supported council resolutions that call on the government to strengthen protections for these targeted operations. The Alberta government passed similar trespass legislation on Nov. 28, 2019.

Ontario Agriculture Minister Ernie Hardeman and OMAFRA officials consulted with DFO, commodity groups, stakeholders and those impacted by interference to livestock operations to gather direct feedback on what the legislation should look like.

DFO is actively engaged in bringing this important piece of legislation to life and will provide updates as the legislative process evolves.
The proposed trespass legislation would provide the following measures:

- aim to prevent risk of exposing farm animals to stress and disease and introducing contaminants into the food supply;
- protect livestock in transport on motor vehicles;
- allow the courts to increase the cost of trespassing with higher fines;
- offer farmers compensation for any farm and livestock damages or theft, and protection from any trespassers’ lawsuits;
- require explicit prior consent to access an animal protection zone on a farm or food processing facility, and consent would be invalid if it was obtained under duress or false pretenses;
- provide exemptions to allow access for law enforcement and persons appointed under provincial animal protection.

To read the full proposed bill, Security from Trespass and Protecting Food Safety Act, 2019, click here.

To read the full news release by OMAFRA, click here.

**About Dairy Farmers of Ontario**

Dairy Farmers of Ontario is the marketing board for the largest sector of Ontario agriculture and is proudly owned and operated by Ontario’s dairy farming families.

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