

# Growing Forward 2 Biosecurity Program: Funding opportunities for horse/stable owners

by Dr. Hernan Ortegon

Growing Forward (GF) was an array of programs promoted and funded by federal, provincial and territorial authorities aimed to develop agriculture and make it more competitive, innovative, profitable and risk based. The first stage of GF lasted for five years and concluded March 31, 2013.

During this first stage, the biosecurity program (one of the 23 GF programs in Alberta) allocated more than \$5.4 million to help support biosecurity initiatives for producers, industry organizations and farm service providers. Participating livestock and poultry producers improved their on-farm biosecurity systems by changing the way they did their daily operations, and by implementing new technologies and equipment. The overall purpose of these actions was to improve the prevention measures for the introduction of diseases to a farm and, if disease was already present, to control and prevent the spread of diseases within the herd or flock and off the farm. By implementing different on-farm biosecurity strategies funded by this program, producers observed a reduction in disease events. The number of biosecurity project proposals and participating commodity groups increased significantly, year after year.

With funding from the GF Biosecurity Program, the Alberta Equestrian Federation and the Alberta Veterinary Medical Association (ABVMA) developed a biosecurity educational program that included the publication of the "Equine Biosecurity Principles and Best Practices" guide together with biosecurity workshops and presentations throughout the province. This successful project reached over 1,600 horse owners and caregivers across Alberta.

Building on the overall success of the GF Biosecurity Program, federal and provincial authorities decided to include biosecurity as a crucial component of the second phase of the federal-provincial-territorial initiative: Growing Forward 2 (GF2). This five-year phase (2013-2018) focuses on developing agriculture by promoting competitiveness and market development as well as adaptability and sustainability of the sector. Assurance systems, such as biosecurity, are a crucial part of this second phase.

The Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development (ARD) Biosecurity team have redesigned the biosecurity program for GF2. Considering the national and international trends on disease management, the GF2 biosecurity program is now more risk-based requiring a risk assessment as a key component of the application.

With this in mind, ARD coordinated with industry organizations in Alberta, including the Alberta Equestrian Federation, to design commodity-based on-farm biosecurity risk assessments, based mostly on the national biosecurity standards that were developed for each commodity. The risk assessment serves as the producer's tool to identify biosecurity gaps in their operation and to help to design a complete on-farm biosecurity improvement plan. The GF2 Biosecurity Program considers the highest risks determined by the risk assessment and, depending on the type of operation/commodity (and the dollar value), will fund the items/measures required to reduce those risks. The program funds producer applications at a 50% cost-share, up to a maximum of \$30,000 per applicant per year. This program offers an opportunity for horse/stable owners to access funding to establish or improve their on-farm biosecurity measures.

Examples of activities identified in the equine biosecurity risk assessment that are eligible for funding include: building quarantine/isolation pens for new or returning horses; purchase of designated equipment, development and implementation of biosecurity training programs for staff, and more.

This program is currently fully subscribed and re-opens April 1, 2014, check the website for future updates. To apply for GF2 Biosecurity funding, horse/stable owners have to complete the equine biosecurity risk assessment, fill in an application describing the project, and obtain quotes and if required the appropriate



Photo credit: Dr. Ana Ulmer-Franco

permits. There are two options to completing the risk assessment: either fill in the self-risk assessment, or call a private industry consultant (e.g. veterinarian, agrologist) to visit the

farm/stable to assess the conditions and to fill in the risk assessment. Horse/stable owners are encouraged to work directly with their veterinarians since they have close contact with the horses and personnel, and they understand and are aware of disease risks to the operation. The GF2 Biosecurity Program reimburses horse/stable owners up to \$250 for the veterinarian's visit to assess the operation and fill in the risk assessment.

Having a risk-based approach for disease management will allow the allocation of funds and efforts to those areas/activities identified as having or presenting the highest risks for disease occurrence, thus reducing the risk of disease and indirectly making agriculture a more profitable sector. This strategy will improve industry competitiveness and facilitate market access.

Additional information can be obtained by calling 310-FARM (3276) or from the Animal Health Biosecurity Producer Program webpage at: [www.growingforward.alberta.ca](http://www.growingforward.alberta.ca). **AB**



Dr. Hernan Ortegon is a veterinarian who currently manages animal health programs with Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development. Dr. Ortegon did his clinical practice in Colombia and then moved to Canada, where he did his master and doctoral programs in Guelph (ON).

A large advertisement for PrairieCoast equipment. The top part features the John Deere logo and the text "PRAIRIECOAST Superior Quality. Trusted Tradition. equipment". Below this, it says "Discounts up to 20% OFF John Deere equipment &amp; attachments for association members". The main image shows a green John Deere tractor decorated with string lights. At the bottom, it says "Visit our Parts department and check out all the Equine Accessories John Deere has available!". Below the tractor image, there are several small images of horse-related equipment: a green saddle, a horse wearing a green protective blanket, a white saddle, and a horse's head. At the bottom of the ad, it lists several locations: "Grande Prairie • Fairview • La Crete • Dawson Creek • Kamloops • Kelowna • Chilliwack • Abbotsford • Langley". The contact information is "Call us Toll Free 1-877-553-3373" and the website "www.prairiecoastequipment.com".

