



BRITISH COLUMBIA CATTLEMEN'S ASSOCIATION

Representing the Beef Cattle Industry of British Columbia

AGRI CENTRE - #4 - 10145 DALLAS DRIVE, KAMLOOPS, B.C. V2C 6T4 PHONE (250) 573-3611 FAX (250) 573-5155

March 10, 2023

Honourable Bruce Ralston
Minister of Forests
PO BOX 9049, STN PROV GOVT.
Victoria, BC V8W 9E2
Email: FOR.Minister@gov.bc.ca

BCCA File: 2023-013
SENT BY EMAIL

Dear Honourable Minister,

RE: Elk Management

Members of the BC Cattlemen's Association are gravely concerned about the impacts of elk on agricultural lands. While we are supporters of enhancing ecosystems and cultivating biodiversity, the increased populations of elk have had detrimental impacts to the cattle sector all across the province.

Many ranchers have seen immense losses in their standing hay and grain crops, harvested stored feed, and damage to their grazing fields, fences, irrigation systems and other farm equipment. Elk habituation has been a topic that we have addressed with government numerous times over recent years, and ranchers can no longer tolerate this level of damage as a result of provincial wildlife.

In 2014, our Association provided government with a document called "Hooked on Hay" which documented the negative impacts of elk on agricultural lands. Below we have highlighted the calls to action to your ministry including:

- Include affected ranchers in the planning and management of wildlife that impacts their private or Crown land tenures.
- Conduct assessments of the forage supply, condition and carrying capacity (that allows for future growth of the cattle industry) in areas with elk habitats.
- Establish population targets and identify ways to maintain targets without impacting landowners or tenure holders.
- Allocate a sufficient budget to monitor and manage the elk.
- Compensate for adverse impacts on ranchers' private land and loss of use on Crown range tenures.
- Modify the ministry's "no hunting/harassing" policy so that landowners are allowed to protect their crops and assets from elk damage.
- Allow landowners to use as a means of mitigation (i.e., dogs, fences, etc.)
- Reinstate the stackyard fencing program to minimize elk damage to stored feed.
- Provide more hunting opportunities for elk (including antlerless seasons) as a means of keeping the population within agreed-upon target levels.
- Provide compensation for wildlife damage to and fences.

In addition, BCCA formally asks government consider:

- A three-point or better bull elk hunting season, and an open season for antlerless elk in areas demonstrating greatest conflicts, presently these are the Thompson, Cariboo, Central, Peace, and Kootenay regions.

- To introduce regional Wildlife Allocation Committees in areas where they are not yet established and allow Agricultural representatives to sit on all established and future committees.

We are pleased to see the provincial Agriculture Wildlife Program, has increased the payment of compensation, which reaffirms the growing need for compensation for losses attributed to wildlife. We look forward to seeing this program continue and encourage government to investigate avenues to provide fair compensation for losses sustained by cattle ranchers, not presently eligible for damage compensation.

Our Association welcomes and encourages further discussion with government on the impacts of elk, and how to effectively mitigate the burdens sustained by ranchers.

Respectfully,



Brian Thomas, President
BC Cattlemen's Association



Judy Madden, Chair
BCCA Environmental Stewardship Committee

CC: Michael Burwash, Associate Director