



# BRITISH COLUMBIA CATTLEMEN'S ASSOCIATION

*Representing the Beef Cattle Industry of British Columbia*

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January 15, 2016

**Ministry of Agriculture  
Strengthening Farming Program**  
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*Our File: 2016-001*  
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## **RE: Discussion Document on Agri-tourism & Retail Sales in the Agricultural Land Reserve**

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The BC Cattlemen's Association has reviewed the Minister's discussion paper and proposed bylaw standards to regulate agri-tourism and retail sales in the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR).

Many ranches in BC are small to medium sized operations that need to supplement income to remain in production. The viability of these ranches creates the critical mass that supports the infrastructure for the entire industry (e.g., auction marts, slaughterhouses, etc.). Agri-tourism is a complementary activity that can take place on ranches/farms and support the overall viability of the operation.

The Association supports the ability for bonafide farmers/ranchers to diversify their operations to capitalize on agri-tourism and local marketing opportunities. Outlined below are key principles along with some recommendations.

### **Guiding Principles**

BCCA Board of Directors have identified the following four guiding principles regarding agri-tourism. It is our view that all four of these principles are necessary to protect farmland while protecting the viability of individual farms.

1. **Agriculture must remain the primary use on the lands.** It is the view of the Association that non-farm uses within the ALR should be limited to those operators whose principal source of income is from agricultural sources; and that income from non-farm uses must remain supplemental. We support the proposal to have "Agri-tourism uses and activities only augment a farm's regular farm income, rather than exceed or replace it."
2. **Encourage agricultural viability rather than discourages entrepreneurs.** Farmers and ranchers need the flexibility to diversify their operations to generate supplemental income for their own viability and growth. Recognizing that non-farm activities need to be regulated, it should be done in a manner that does not discourage self-sufficiency through diversification.
3. **Non-farm activities must not reduce the agricultural potential of the landbase.** It is important to ensure that there isn't an erosion of farmland because of agri-tourism or commercial activities. As long as the soils or productive capability of the land has not been diminished through the non-farm activity, it should be considered as an allowable use.
4. **Non-farm activities should not impact neighbouring farms/ranches.** Regulations or bylaws must be in place to prevent any potential negative impacts on neighbouring farms/ranches from supplemental farm activities, like agri-tourism. Agricultural activities must take precedent over all other supplemental activities.

## **Recommendations**

BC Cattlemen's Association has identified the following recommendations:

- **Non-farm activities must meet the above guiding principles.** The four principles outlined above would allow flexibility for entrepreneurs while maintaining farmland integrity.
- **Weddings are a form of agri-tourism.** (Sec. 3.10) BCCA considers weddings to be a form of agri-tourism and recommends they be included on the list of permitted agri-tourism activities (not requiring ALC application). Wedding guests are often not from the area and are tourists by definition. Weddings provide another avenue to highlight food and/or beverages that are produced by the farm/ranch. The farm or ranch probably utilize (market) their food or drink products in the wedding reception. Ranches provide many ecological goods and services to society such as greenspace, scenic vistas, and a diversity of wildlife. Hosting a wedding, or other event, is a great opportunity to showcase these benefits that agriculture provides. Attendees at a rural wedding are more likely to return to the area and participate in another form of agri-tourism being offered by other farmers (e.g., corn maze, tours, hay/wagon rides, etc.).
- **Income ratio rather than temporary/seasonal.** BCCA recommends that as long as the non-farm activity is a supplemental income and does not negatively impact the ability of the land to be farmed, then it should not be necessary to restrict the use as temporary or seasonal. The scale of the activity needs to be considered relative to the agricultural operation.
- **Farm level rather than per lot.** (Sec 3.1) BCCA recommends clarifying the term "on the same lot". Most ranches are made up of several parcels (or lots) that we feel should be considered collectively rather than on individual lots.
- **Biosecurity.** (Sec 3.7.1) The BCCA suggests that operations with commercial herds or flocks should take steps to protect themselves from biosecurity hazards to minimize unintended introduction or transmission of pests/disease.

Agri-tourism provides a host of benefits for the individual farm operator, and the potential for economic spin-off to other farms in the area. Perhaps the greatest benefit is the positive exposure to primary agriculture. In a world where most people are unfamiliar with farming, it is important to give urban people positive first-hand experiences with the people and places where their food comes from.

On behalf of our members, we appreciate the opportunity to provide feedback on the discussion paper and thank you in advance for considering our recommendations.

Yours truly,



Lary Fossum, President  
BC Cattlemen's Association