

October 31, 2024

Hon. Michael Kerzner  
Minister of the Solicitor General  
Ministry of the Solicitor General  
18th Floor, 25 Grosvenor Street  
Toronto, ON M7A 1Y6

Sent via email: [michael.kerzner@ontario.ca](mailto:michael.kerzner@ontario.ca)

Dear Minister Kerzner:

**Re: Request for Meeting to Discuss 2023 Animal Welfare Services Annual Report**

On behalf of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA), I would like to thank you for the release of the 2023 Animal Welfare Services Annual Report. The report provides valuable insights into the work of the Animal Welfare Services (AWS) team, and the efforts to protect animals across the province. As Ontario's largest general farm organization, representing over 38,000 farm families, OFA is deeply committed to ensuring the highest standards of animal care and welfare on Ontario's farms, while also safeguarding the sustainability and viability of the agricultural sector.

In reviewing the recent annual report, OFA noted several points that we would appreciate the opportunity to discuss in greater detail with you and your team:

- 1. Animal Welfare Data:** The report outlines key data regarding inspections, investigations, and compliance actions related to animal welfare in Ontario. While the OFA supports efforts to ensure high standards of care for farm animals, we would like to further analyze the data to better understand the specific trends pertaining to commercial agricultural operations. We believe that a deeper understanding of the inspections and investigations data can provide additional context that will help shape future regulatory and enforcement approaches.
- 2. Specialized Compliance Unit:** The report mentions the role of specialized units in ensuring compliance with the *Provincial Animal Welfare Services (PAWS) Act*. We are particularly interested in discussing the role and activities of the specialized compliance unit with respect to commercial livestock and poultry operations and businesses. Farmers in Ontario already follow stringent animal welfare standards, and it is critical that the

compliance unit's work reflects the practical realities of farm management, and industry best practices.

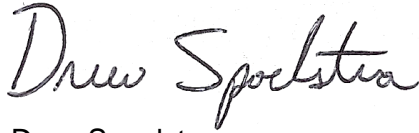
3. **Large Animal Veterinarians as Team Members:** We would like to discuss the inclusion of large animal veterinarians as part of the internal AWS team, and when investigating complaints dealing with livestock. It is essential that officers enforcing animal welfare standards have specialized knowledge of modern agricultural practices and an understanding of the seasonal and operational factors that affect farm animals. The nature and complexity of caring for large animals, such as cattle, horses, and other livestock and poultry, require specialized expertise that general animal welfare officers may not always possess. Large animal veterinarians bring an essential perspective and skill set that would greatly enhance the capacity of AWS to effectively address animal welfare concerns within agricultural contexts. Collaboration with large animal veterinarians as part of the internal discussions and when investigating animal welfare complaints would improve decision-making and responses, enhance relationships with the farming community, and support training and education initiatives.
4. **Future Collaboration and Consultation:** The OFA is committed to continuing our partnership with your ministry in promoting animal welfare, while also ensuring that farm businesses remain sustainable and viable. We appreciate the ongoing roundtables between AWS, Ontario ministries, farm organizations, and commodity groups. OFA believes that ongoing collaboration and consultation with the agricultural stakeholders is essential to achieving these shared goals. A continued structured dialogue with your ministry will allow us to provide input on future regulatory updates, training for enforcement officers, and strategies to ensure positive outcomes for both animals and farmers.

Ontario farmers care about their animals and are committed to farm animal welfare by upholding high standards of care of their animals in alignment with the national codes of practice. Animal welfare continues to be a main priority for OFA. Given the importance of these topics, we respectfully request a meeting to discuss the 2023 AWS Annual Report, the data it presents, the role of the specialized compliance unit, and the inclusion of large animal veterinarians in welfare investigations. We are confident that such a discussion will foster greater understanding and help to strengthen the protection of livestock and poultry welfare in the province.

OFA would also like to extend to you an invite to our Annual General Meeting (AGM) and Convention, themed *Agriculture – Always in Season*, being held in November at the Delta Airport Hotel, located at 655 Dixon Road, Toronto, Ontario. We are pleased to invite you to join use for our Welcome Reception on Monday, November 25<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 p.m., and our Harvest Celebration dinner on Tuesday, November 26<sup>th</sup>, at 6:30 p.m. to engage with farmers, agricultural professionals, policy makers, and stakeholders who are committed to fostering a sustainable and innovative agricultural industry in Ontario.

Thank you for considering this invitation; Please let us know at your earliest convenience if you are available to attend. We look forward to the possibility of welcoming you at our AGM and working together to protect the long-term viability and prosperity of Ontario's farm sector.

Sincerely,



Drew Spoelstra  
President