



July 15, 2025

The Honourable Trevor Jones
Ministry of Agriculture, Food & Agribusiness
77 Grenville Street
Toronto, ON
M7A 1B3

Sent via email: minister.omafa@ontario.ca

Dear Minister,

Re: Issues Regarding the Ontario Wildlife Damage Compensation Program

The Ontario Wildlife Damage Compensation Program (OWDCP) is a valuable resource to livestock producers in Ontario. We have appreciated the responsiveness of your ministry in the past when issues have been identified and addressed.

Our organizations recently participated in a meeting of the provincial Agriculture Wildlife Conflict working group. At that meeting, we suggested improvements to the program we feel will reduce program costs, address producer concerns and improve the responsiveness of the program to our farmers. It was suggested at that meeting that we bring our concerns and solutions to your attention.

This year, our organizations received feedback from our producers that the amount of time between reporting livestock damage and a producer receiving compensation was over six months and, in some cases, almost a year. Additionally, inspectors in some municipalities are not responding in a reasonable time to producer reports of damage and livestock kills are having to be documented by producers rather than inspectors to capture the required proof of wildlife damage.

There is broad inconsistency in program delivery through municipalities that leads to inequity between farmers across the province. Some municipalities send inspectors right away and pay claims immediately. While others rarely send inspectors and hold money even when it is transferred by the province until council approves the transfer, which causes significant delay.

Our boards recommend the province administer the program equitably to all producers by introducing an online wildlife damage reporting form. We understand a form may already exist and be in use for farmers

in unorganized townships. Producers can submit their own photos and investigators can be engaged only when the province requires additional information.

This reduction of red tape will save the province and municipalities thousands of dollars in administration time and the cost of investigators for every claim.

The OWDCP does not accurately reflect the true valuation of commercial breeding sheep stock lost to predation. Presently, commercial breeding sheep stock is only compensated at the cull animal meat price. The cull animal value does not truly reflect any breeding stock value. There is no compensation value given for the many years and thousands of dollars of investment in a commercial breeding program and the future flock genetic improvement these animals represent. Commercial or non-purebred genetics does not mean they are of lower quality than purebred genetics. In many purchases, the commercial ewe genetics have a value premium due to hybrid vigor resulting from the genetic selection for specific traits inherent in other breeds.

To further improve the program, an annual survey of sheep breeders reporting actual values of commercial and purebred breeding stock sold should be conducted. The survey can also help identify the added value for specific breeds utilized for their quality wool or their dairy milk production. Similar to breeding stock, the actual value of these animals is significantly more than the cull meat price. The survey could also determine a value for livestock guardian dogs when they are also lost to predation.

In addition to concerns regarding wildlife predation, Ontario farmers also face losses from domestic dog attacks, yet the compensation framework for these incidents remains outdated and inconsistent with the support provided under the OWDCP. While the OWDCP provides compensation to poultry and livestock producers at market value based on industry-recognized pricing, losses caused by domestic dogs fall under the *Protection of Livestock and Poultry from Dogs Act*, which does not follow the same valuation approach. This discrepancy results in significantly lower compensation rates for producers who experience losses due to domestic dog attacks.

For example, under the OWDCP, non-registered cattle are compensated up to \$4,000, while the *Protection of Livestock and Poultry from Dogs Act* only provides up to \$2,500 for the same loss. The lack of regular updates to compensation rates under this separate legislative framework creates an unjust financial burden for affected producers. This disparity does not reflect the true economic loss suffered by farmers and fails to provide adequate support for their livestock protection efforts.

We recommend harmonizing the compensation structure for livestock losses caused by domestic dogs with the OWDCP model, ensuring that all producers receive fair and up-to-date compensation based on industry standards. Aligning these programs would create a more equitable system, recognizing that the source of predation—whether wildlife or domestic dogs—should not determine the financial viability of a farm business recovering from a loss.

We thank you for the opportunity to bring forward these recommendations that can strengthen the Ontario Wildlife Damage Compensation Program and we look forward to working with you to ensure the program is able to compensate producers in a fair and timely manner for predation losses.

Sincerely,

Craig McLaughlin Drew Spoelstra



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