



## **MEDIA RELEASE – For immediate release**

### **Veterinarians Develop Disease Protocols to Protect Livestock and People**

**July 16, 2008 (Milton, ON)** – The Ontario Veterinary Medical Association (OVMA) has developed new biosecurity protocols to assist veterinarians and farmers to prevent and manage disease outbreaks that can threaten animal and human health.

(The term *biosecurity* refers to protecting health by preventing the transmission of disease.)

The new measures are specifically designed for large animal veterinarians in general practice and their livestock farm clients. They will complement existing biosecurity protocols in veterinary medicine, government, agriculture and the food industry.

Dr. Paul Innes, Lead Veterinarian for Provincial Biosecurity with the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, is a strong proponent of the use of biosecurity protocols in reducing the risk of disease outbreaks and containing them if they occur. “The implementation of proper biosecurity protocols by farmers and veterinarians greatly reduces the risk of spreading zoonotic diseases, which are the ones that can also make people sick. The potentially deadly H5N1 strain of avian influenza, or bird flu, is a glaring example of why biosecurity is so important,” said Dr. Innes.

One of the main objectives of the initiative is to ensure that veterinarians are part of the solution and not part of the problem. In human medicine, doctors, nurses and other healthcare practitioners can unintentionally spread disease from one patient to another. Similarly, veterinarians can spread disease from one farm to another if effective biosecurity protocols are not in place.

Veterinarians play a vital role in the control of infectious animal disease. According to Dr. Innes, “This initiative will better equip veterinarians to prevent and respond to animal health emergencies, because it builds upon the considerable amount of work that has already been done to protect animals and humans.”

Through extensive research, planning and consultation, this project has resulted in the development of important biosecurity tools for both veterinarians and livestock farmers. The program includes an “On-farm Biosecurity Risk Assessment Tool”, which enables veterinarians to assess their clients’ biosecurity risks and identify areas for improvement. The “On-farm Biosecurity Risk Assessment Tool” and other disease-control resources will be used as a basis for the veterinary biosecurity pilot program that will be initiated in the next phase of the project.

Funding for the initiative has been provided by Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada and the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. The initiative is being managed by the Ontario Veterinary Medical Association and was launched in November 2007.

-30-

#### **Background**

Founded in 1980, the Ontario Veterinary Medical Association represents more than 3,300 Ontario veterinarians in private practice, government, academia, industry and public service. Its mandate is to advance and promote excellence in the veterinary profession in Ontario, and contribute to the betterment of animal health and the protection of human health.

eBiz Professionals Inc. is a Guelph-based consulting firm specializing in the agriculture and food industries, and focused on animal health, food safety, biosecurity and traceability. eBiz was instrumental in the formation of the Veterinarian Advisory Forum, and is a member of both the Ontario Livestock and Poultry Council and the Poultry Industry Council.

**OVMA: Your Source. Your Voice. 420 Bronte Street South, Suite 205, Milton ON L9T 0H9**

T. 905.875.0756 or 1.800.670.1702 (toll-free) • F. 905.875.0958 or 1.877.482.5941 (toll-free) • info@ovma.org • www.ovma.org

OMAFRA continues to work with agriculture industries and organizations to improve and strengthen biosecurity, animal health and emergency preparedness in the province. OMAFRA also works closely with the Canadian Food Inspection Agency to develop and promote such initiatives nationally. Through the Office of the Chief Veterinarian, OMAFRA has developed a Farm Visit Biosecurity Protocol for government staff, which has been shared with many other governmental and non-governmental organizations.

The Agricultural Adaptation Council is a non-profit, grass roots coalition of 71 agricultural, agribusiness and rural organizations dedicated to providing financial resources, provided by the federal and provincial government, to help Ontario's agriculture and agri-food industry remain profitable, grow and maintain its economic strength.

For general inquiries, contact:  
Nadia Vercillo, Manager of Communications & Public Relations  
Ontario Veterinary Medical Association  
1.800.670.1702 ext 15, [nvercillo@ovma.org](mailto:nvercillo@ovma.org)

For details about the Biosecurity Protocols initiative, contact:  
Alec Martin DVM, Project Coordinator  
eBiz Professionals Inc.  
1.519.362.4380, [amartin@vstepontario.org](mailto:amartin@vstepontario.org)