



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – December 12, 2017

**Backgrounder for News Release
Provincial Auditor's 2017 Report – Volume 2**

Agriculture

Ministry of Agriculture – Mitigating the Risk of Livestock Disease (Chapter 20)

The Ministry of Agriculture is doing a good job of preventing and controlling the spread of diseases among farmed animals in Saskatchewan but needs to better document a number of key areas.

Its Provincial Notifiable Disease List identifies 14 diseases that livestock producers and veterinarians must report. The Ministry helps educate producers on preventing and controlling these diseases.

In addition, the Ministry has documented plans to guide its response to reported cases of 3 of the 14-notifiable diseases. As these plans require, in the event of a positive case, the Ministry actively works with local veterinarians to ensure appropriate actions are taken to reduce the risk of the disease spreading. The Ministry also has a plan to prevent the spread of foreign or emerging animal diseases, in the event of an occurrence.

Provincial Auditor Judy Ferguson reports that the Ministry was notified of positive cases of livestock diseases promptly (within 24 hours of the case being confirmed). However, its record keeping of cases of livestock disease needs improvement. The Ministry needs to consistently summarize key information for each positive case of livestock disease to confirm appropriate action was taken, and to permanently record actions taken.

In addition, the Ministry needs documented support for its decisions on which livestock diseases warrant: provincial monitoring, closer scrutiny through surveillance activities, and more active involvement of the Ministry.

Saskatchewan exports a significant portion of its livestock. Over the past three years, average annual revenue of the livestock sector was around \$2 billion. Even a single positive case of certain livestock diseases can cause severe implications for the province's livestock sector. In addition, certain livestock diseases may cause concern for food safety, animal welfare, and human health.

Environment

Ministry of Environment – Detecting Wildfires (Chapter 23)

Detecting wildfires quickly is essential in reducing the impact on people, the environment, and the economy. In 2016-17, the Ministry spent \$48 million on managing wildfires (2015-16: \$123 million).

Provincial Auditor Judy Ferguson found that the Ministry was doing a decent job of detecting wildfires but needed to improve two areas. It needs to obtain wildfire prevention and preparedness information (e.g., location, number of people, structures) from industrial and commercial operators operating during the wildfire season. It also needs to update its database of values-at-risk (e.g., cabins, work camps). Having complete and up-to-date information about values-at-risk is key to prioritizing wildfire detection activities appropriately.



Health

Ministry of Health and Ministry of Agriculture – Regulating Meat Safety Follow Up (Chapter 35)

In Saskatchewan, unlike other provinces, two ministries (Health and Agriculture) share the responsibility for regulating slaughter plants. Provincial Auditor Judy Ferguson's 2012 audit on regulating meat safety raised concerns about the Government's inconsistent approach to regulating meat safety in the province. The about 10 agriculture-licensed slaughter plants are subject to more rigorous inspection standards than the over 60 health-licensed plants.

Five years after the initial audit, the Government of Saskatchewan still had not drafted changes to legislation that would allow it to move towards a unified system where one ministry would regulate all slaughter plants in the province.

By September 2017, the Ministry of Health had partially improved its meat safety processes by implementing three of six remaining recommendations related to health-licensed slaughter plants; but it was awaiting the Government's decision before making further improvements. Key improvements included assessing risks to meat safety, analyzing trends in public complaints related to slaughter plants and contaminated meat, and reporting to its senior management on causes of sanitation problems in slaughter plants.

However, the Ministry of Health still needs to approve its draft slaughter plant sanitation standards, monitor inspections performed by health authority inspectors, and publicly post licence information and inspection results on its website. Implementing the remaining recommendations and taking a consistent approach to slaughter plant regulation would help to ensure that meat sold is safe for human consumption.

Justice—Corrections and Public Safety

Ministry of Justice – Community Rehabilitation of Adult Offenders Follow Up (Chapter 38)

The Ministry of Justice has further work to do to improve its processes to rehabilitate adult offenders in the community. By October 2017, the Ministry had implemented only three of the seven recommendations made in our 2011 audit that focused on its Regina Qu'Appelle region.

The Ministry had established an evaluation process for rehabilitation services provided to high-risk adult offenders by other agencies, and began to monitor whether these offenders have timely access to priority rehabilitation programs.

However, more work remains to support the rehabilitation of adult offenders. The Ministry needs to consistently follow its already established policies for offender case management and supervision. For example, the Ministry's sample of offender case files found it was not completing risk assessments and case plans for adult offenders in a timely manner. About one-half of the case files the Ministry examined did not have the risk assessments and case plans completed within six weeks of the offenders starting their community sentence. About three-quarters of the case files the Ministry examined did not have regular progress reports completed. Effective rehabilitation of adult offenders helps to reduce the likelihood of them repeating crimes.



Ministry of Justice – Supporting Provincial Court of Saskatchewan to Manage Court Workloads Follow Up (Chapter 40)

The Ministry of Justice administratively supports the Provincial Court in managing court workloads. The Provincial Auditor identified six areas of improvement in the 2014 audit of the Ministry's processes to support the Provincial Court to manage court workloads.

By July 2017, the Ministry of Justice had implemented one of the six recommendations made in the 2014 audit. It had reviewed and updated Court Services' administrative policies and procedures.

While it was working on implementing the remaining five areas, the Ministry needs to complete that work. These include using standard training for court staff; finish developing its forecasting model to assess resources needed to support management of court workloads; setting key targets to support the management of court workloads in its Court Services Strategic Plan (e.g., reducing time-to-trial); and publishing key actions used to address operating pressures related to supporting the management of court workloads.

Pressures on managing the increasing provincial court workloads have continued. For example, the Ministry's costs of supporting the Provincial Court continued to exceed budget with overtime hours increasing since the 2014 audit.

In July 2016, the Supreme Court of Canada set an 18-month ceiling for cases to be tried in a provincial court to ensure timely justice. To avoid exceeding this ceiling and to support cases being tried in a reasonable period, the Ministry must take further steps to support the Provincial Court. Delays in court hearings can result in additional costs (e.g., hold the accused in detention centres) and reduce public faith in the province's justice system.

For More Information

The full Provincial Auditor's *2017 Report – Volume 2*, which includes further details and other Provincial Auditor's findings and recommendations, is available online at www.auditor.sk.ca.

Contacts

Judy Ferguson, FCPA, FCA

Provincial Auditor of Saskatchewan
1500-1920 Broad Street
Regina, Saskatchewan S4P 3V2
Telephone: 306-787-6372
Fax: 306-787-6383
Email: info@auditor.sk.ca

Mindy Ellis

Communications Specialist
1500-1920 Broad Street
Regina, Saskatchewan S4P 3V2
Telephone: 306-787-6374
Fax: 306-787-6383
Email: ellis@auditor.sk.ca