

BC Goat Association Interview with Lisa Levesque team lead for Traceability and Premise ID from Ministry of Agriculture.

Q. BCGA - What is the brief history of why Premise ID is in place?

A. Lisa Levesque from Ministry of Agriculture –

Premises ID links livestock and poultry to specific geographic locations, enhancing the Province's ability to work with industry to locate and protect animals and infrastructure during environmental emergencies like floods and wildfires, and to respond effectively to animal health threats. A "premise" is a parcel of land where animals are raised, kept, assembled, or disposed of. Premises may be a farm, hobby farm, stable, feedlot, veterinary clinic, livestock market, abattoir, fairground, or other type of operation where livestock or poultry are present on the site.

Since 2011, the B.C. Ministry of Agriculture has offered voluntary premises ID registration, yet despite the introduction of an online registration system in 2016 ([BCPID Online](#)) and growing recognition of the value of premises ID among producers and industry groups, only an estimated 57% of premises have been registered to date. These persistent gaps in premises ID registration continue to hinder government and industry's ability to respond quickly and continue to operate during emergencies and put Canada's animal traceability system at risk.

Q. BCGA - What does the Provincial/Federal Government use the information for?

A. Lisa Levesque from Ministry of Agriculture-

Premises ID information is collected by the BC Ministry of Agriculture staff and stored in a secure database with strictly limited access. Use, collection and disclosure of premises ID information is strictly controlled under the *BC Animal Health Act*. Below are a few illustrative examples of situations where premises ID information might be used by or requested from the premises ID program by emergency response agencies, including the federal government:

- ◆ To identify and notify farm operations that are at-risk from natural disaster events (e.g. fires, floods) or environmental threats (e.g. spilling of anhydrous ammonia, water contamination);
- ◆ To identify operations with at-risk species along transportation corridors from an at-risk area where a reportable disease has been detected;
- ◆ Zoning or quarantining areas with at-risk animals to maintain the movement of unaffected animals to markets;

- ◆ Designing and implementing table-top emergency response planning exercises to simulate real scenarios for notifiable diseases; and
- ◆ Disease modelling exercises to determine potential impacts and and/or recovery plans.

More specifically BCPID information has been used to respond to the following events in BC:

Diseases

- Hatching Egg Disease Investigation 2013/14
- Poultry – **Avian Influenza** (2009, **2014/15**)
- Dairy Cattle Parasite Risk Identification (2015)
- Poultry - ILT (2015, 2017, 2018, 2019)
- Poultry - Salmonella (2017)
- Bovine Tuberculosis 2018/19

Natural Disasters

- **Wildfires** (2015, **2017, 2018**)
- Floods/Fraser Freshet (2017, 2018, 2019)
- Drought (2015,2018,2019)

Environmental Pollution

- Lickman Road Substation Fire (Chilliwack) Jan 2012
- Lemon Creek Fuel Spill (Slocan Valley) July 2013
- Masonville Plastics Fire (Surrey) June 2015
- Anderson Creek Spill (Surrey) September 2017
- Aldergrove Spill May 2018

Q. BCGA - What is the Premise ID information not used for?

A. Lisa Levesque from Ministry of Agriculture-

Some examples of when premises ID has been requested but not provided:

- Requests from other AGRI program areas or staff
- Requests from university grad students, researchers
- Requests from other government agencies unrelated to emergency response
- Information requested by a regional district in the planning stages of an emergency, before the emergency has been declared (we only provide aggregate data – no names, locations)
- NOTE: BC Premises ID program has no linkages with BC Assessment or the CRA, and have never received a request for information from those agencies

Q. BCGA - Is it easy to get a Premise ID?

A. Lisa Levesque from Ministry of Agriculture- Very easy, and totally free. You can register today! The easiest way to open an account, register your premises and update your account information is to use the BC Premises ID Online tool ([BCPID Online](https://www.gov.bc.ca/premisesidprogram)) which can be accessed on our website: www.gov.bc.ca/premisesidprogram.

Online registration takes approximately 15 minutes to complete. A [short video tutorial](#) is available on our website to walk you through the process.

You can also mail, email, or fax a paper registration form to the Ministry. Instructions and a link to download the paper registration form are available on the [program website](#) listed above.

Q. BCGA - What are the benefits for farmers with a Premise ID?

A. Lisa Levesque from Ministry of Agriculture-

Animal evacuations:

Premises ID was a valuable tool for evacuating animals during the 2017 wildfires. BC Cattlemen's Association has stated that hundreds of animals' lives were saved because of the information provided by the premises ID program.

From a recent survey conducted by our program: one respondent commented that if their farm emergency plan fails or they need additional help during an emergency, they "*will be glad that the government has their information (i.e., knows where their animals are and how many) so that they can provide additional help*". Similarly, another respondent noted that "*not everyone has trailers for evacuating their animals and recounted that their horse was moved three times to escape wildfires around 100 Mile House in 2017*".

Limited access to evacuation zones:

To ensure public safety during wildfires or other events, re-entry permitting processes are often put in place by local authorities to limit movement into affected areas. Premises ID account holders have recounted that because they had a premises ID, they were more easily able to re-enter evacuation zones to tend to their animals, open fencing to help animals escape the fires or trailer animals to safer locations in 2017 and 2018. These efforts saved the lives of hundreds of animals.

Better informed emergency responders

During large disasters, responders often come in from other places and are not familiar with the area, so having maps and information about farm and livestock locations at their fingertips is critical to better emergency response and support for farmers.

Animal health and welfare

Farmers have strong personal connection to their animals, and the health and welfare of their animals is of utmost importance to them. Premises ID is a simple way to reduce risks to farm animals during a disease emergency – it's important for all animals to be accounted for so that threats can be better managed.

Certainty of farm location

Addresses in rural areas can sometimes be very similar to one another or may not be accurate enough to locate where animals are physically located. This kind of confusion was one of the key reasons that the Avian Influenza outbreak in 2004 was so devastating, and why all regulated poultry operators are now required to have a premises ID number.

Ability to continue operating

Accurate knowledge of where operations are located in relation to affected premises can enable a faster and more targeted response that doesn't cripple an entire industry. Those with direct experience with the Avian Influenza outbreaks in B.C. have noted that because premises ID provides high quality location information, farms within risk zones could easily be identified and unaffected operation could continue operating. This greatly minimized the economic and personal impact of the 2014 Avian Influenza outbreak.

Preparing for Climate Change

A changing climate has the potential to bring new, unforeseen animal diseases to B.C. with unknown consequences. Diseases that have so far been geographically contained and not found in B.C. could begin to migrate, and new diseases never seen before could also emerge. Similarly, with the severity and frequency of natural disasters predicted to increase in the coming years, it is very important to have strong emergency response systems in place to minimize impacts of these disasters on farmers.

Q. BCGA - Specifically What would a goat producer use Premise ID for?

A. Lisa Levesque from Ministry of Agriculture-

If premises ID registration becomes mandatory in BC, goat producers may be required to provide a premises ID number to apply for or renew certain types of operating licenses, or to apply for or receive funding through provincial programs, including agriculture or livestock insurance programs administered by the Province.

Premises ID is one of three pillars of an effective livestock traceability system, along with animal identification and animal movement reporting. It is expected that goat producers will be required to report their premises ID number when moving animals under proposed new federal traceability regulations, which are anticipated to be announced in 2020. Ministry staff will help to support and inform BC livestock operators when these changes are announced by the federal government. Registering with the premises ID program is a simple step that producers can take to be prepared for these changes.

Q. BCGA - Is there anything else you would like BCGA members to know about Premise ID?

A. Lisa Levesque from Ministry of Agriculture-

Setting up a cost-free premises identification (ID) account is a simple but important step that all responsible goat owners and operators can take to protect the health and safety of their animals, and of all BC producers