
Terms of reference

Feral Horse Advisory Committee



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Background

Official Committee Name: Feral Horse Advisory Committee

The Feral Horse Advisory Committee was re-established in spring of 2021 to provide recommendations to the Government of Alberta on the management of feral horse populations within the Equine Management Zones designated under section 9(1) of the *Stray Animals Act*. The Committee previously worked from 2013 to 2017 and the intent of the re-established Committee is to update and build on that work.

Purpose

The purpose of the Committee is to provide a forum of open dialogue between the Alberta government, feral horse stakeholders, subject matter experts and other key land use stakeholders to support the government's development of a feral horse management framework. The Committee will use current knowledge and understanding of feral horses, habitat use and population dynamics to support their recommendations. The Office of the Chief Scientist and researchers working on feral horse studies will provide support to the Committee. Through the Committee, recommendations will be provided to the Government of Alberta on the management of feral horses and opportunities discussed on how to work together on science, research and management to ensure the population is managed at a sustainable level.

The intent of the Committee is to:

- 1) Share information about the science, knowledge, issues and management regarding feral horses within the Equine Management Zones in the Eastern Slopes.
- 2) Provide advice to the Government of Alberta to help inform the development of a future feral horse management framework.

The recommendations of the Committee will be based on the best available science and knowledge and work will be based on the previously agreed upon principle:

"The province needs to manage Alberta's feral horse population to an appropriate number, in a humane and effective manner, while having regard to the primary objective of ensuring their continued presence within the context of healthy rangelands supporting multiple uses on the landscape."

Committee Goals and Objectives

Goal of the Committee:

- 1) To share information about the science, indigenous knowledge, issues and management regarding feral horses within the Equine Management Zones in the eastern slopes and associated linkages to wildlife populations, grazing, sustainable ecosystems.
- 2) Provide advice to the Government of Alberta to help inform the development of a feral horse management framework and collaborate on its implementation.

Objectives:

- Maintain a presence of feral horses on the landscape in the horse capture area while recognizing the need to steward the landscape in an ecologically sustainable manner.
- Mitigate risk to public safety or private property.
- Continue supporting feral horse research and monitoring as essential components of active management of feral horses.
- Consider social, economic and environmental influences in developing a feral horse management framework that will be sustainable over the long term.
- Use the most recent feral horse research and scientific and indigenous knowledge to guide the Committee's recommendations.
- Use the knowledge, experience and values of stakeholders to gather important information for the feral horse management framework.
- Ensure sustainable ecosystems and habitats are foundational as part of any strategies or plans developed and implemented.

Deliverables:

1. Shared understanding of science, research, horse population levels, management options and other relevant information for feral horse management.
2. A feral horse management framework for the equine management zones of Southwestern Alberta that supports the listed objectives.
3. An ongoing strategy that supports the implementation of the feral horse management framework including an ongoing Committee role to support framework updates if and when required.

Communications

Meetings will be chaired by the Executive Director of Lands Delivery and Coordination South. Meeting minutes will be circulated to Committee members following each meeting as draft for members to clarify the minutes and will be finalized at the next meeting. Meetings will not be digitally recorded by the Government of Alberta or committee members.

Meeting agendas will be developed by the Chair in consultation with members of the Committee and circulated via email prior to the meeting.

In order to maintain the integrity of the process and the cooperative spirit, the Advisory Committee will be expected to communicate as a team. A degree of confidentiality in discussions is expected. Members should feel free to speak during committee meetings on issues without concern that information and the content of Committee discussions will be shared with the general public before decisions have been reached as a Committee. The Committee will ensure confidentiality on agenda items until members agree to make information publicly available.

The decision to publicly share information and/or recommendations made by the committee will be made by the committee and approved by the committee chair. Decisions around dissemination of information will be made at the end of each meeting about what information can be shared with Committee members' respective organizations and recorded in the meeting minutes.

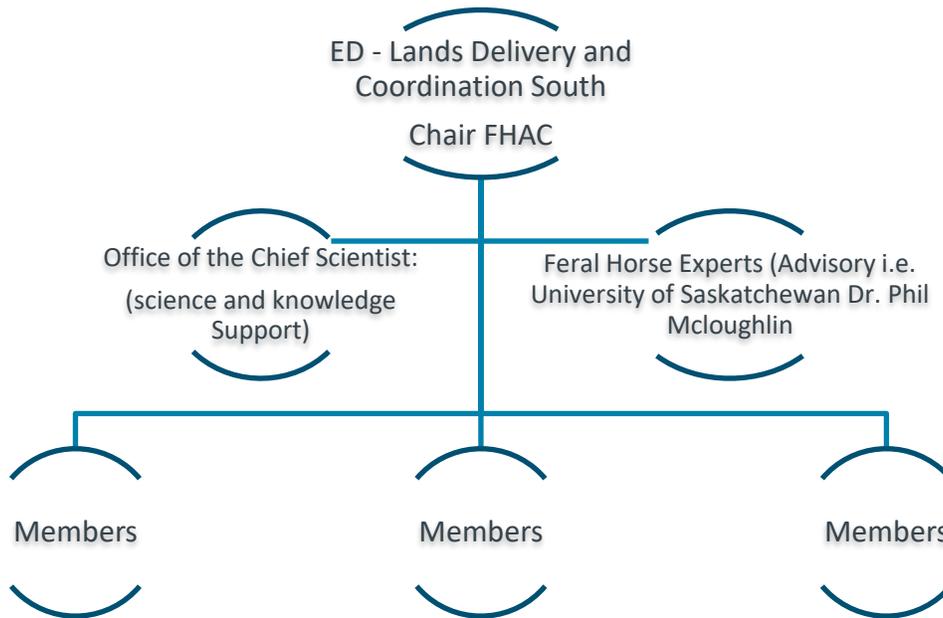
There will be no attribution of statements coming from the committee to individuals, organizations, or companies and any statements directly related to committee work must be approved by the committee or committee chair.

The following communication principles shall be upheld with the committee.

- It is not the role of government or the facilitators to muzzle anyone or to have any organization suspend their missions or mandates as organizations, but in terms of working collaboratively, members should not act in any way that undermines another Member
- No one should be stifled from representing their reviews or the views of their organizations, not only at the Committee but also publicly. However, no one should represent the views of other Committee Members. What those individuals say during meetings should stay at the meetings. Publicly representing the views of others, without their consent, stifles the work of the Committee and diminishes a Member's ability to influence others at the table and to achieve certain goals the organization may have as a member of the Committee
- To achieve the work of the Committee and develop the best outcome, everyone at the table should be allowed to contribute their input freely
- It is critically important the diverse views and perspectives, of the membership, on the common issue of feral horses, be heard and considered in the development of a management strategy
- No Member should represent the views of any other Committee Member publicly. Representing the views of others without context – why a statement was made, how a statement was made and in what context such statement was made – leads to a misrepresentation of what was said and misinforms the public. Members participate and share their perspectives with the expectation that such will contribute to the collective and collaborative development of an overall management strategy, and not that such perspectives are intended to stand alone as the views of the Committee, unless accepted and endorsed by the Committee and communicated by a chosen representative of the Committee.

Membership

Feral Horse Advisory Committee Structure:



ROLE	INDIVIDUAL/ORGANIZATION	RESPONSIBILITIES
CHAIR	Rob Simieritsch, Executive Director, Lands Delivery & Coordination South, Lands Division	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide leadership and direction • Ensure meetings are called and held in accordance with the organizations' mandate • Chair meetings • Relay pertinent information to minister
GOVERNMENT OF ALBERTASTAFF	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Michael Alexander, Director Rangeland Conservation and Stewardship • Lisa Schrader, Lands Officer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide Subject Matter Expertise and Operational perspectives • Provide program-area information
SECRETARY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kelsey Cartwright, Area Range Management Specialist, AEP 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responsible for the documentation and communication of the activities of the Committee
MEMBERSHIP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alberta Conservation Association • Alberta Fish and Game Association • Alberta Professional Outfitters Association • Alberta Wilderness Association • Bryn Thiessen • Horse Welfare Alliance of Canada 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide constructive feedback from their organizations' perspectives • Provide pertinent information for the purpose of a beneficial exchange of information and perspectives on Alberta's Feral Horses • Bring forth concerns and issues

- Help Alberta Wildies Society
- Livestock Identification Services
- Rocky Mountain Forest Range Association
- Spray Lakes Sawmills
- Stoney Nakoda Nation
- RCMP
- University of Alberta
- Wild Horses of Alberta Society

SUBJECT MATTER EXPERTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic Experts • GOA staff from Environment and Parks, Agriculture and Forestry • Representatives from nongovernment organizations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Subject matter experts that have been identified as being supportive of a specific topic discussion will be utilized as required. • Subject matter experts will be invited to attend and contribute to meetings by the chair.
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In order to ensure consistency in participation and size of the Committee, membership will be limited to a primary member and a designated alternate. During virtual meetings, both the primary and alternate are permitted to attend and listen to the discussion; however, only the primary will be permitted to speak on behalf of the organization. For in person meetings, only one representative will be permitted at each meeting.

Schedule

The Committee will meet approximately every three weeks for the first three online Zoom meetings. Pending COVID 19 restrictions, in-person meetings will be scheduled in the late spring/summer/fall 2021. If the Committee determines that meetings should occur more or less frequently based on current initiatives, the frequency of meetings can be adjusted.

Upon completion of a management framework, it is anticipated the Committee will meet less frequently (e.g. Semiannual) to discuss ongoing activities and information on feral horses.

Governance

The Chair will be tasked with providing leadership and direction on the purpose of the Committee, the roles and responsibilities of Committee members, and ensuring that meetings are called and held in accordance with the Committee’s mandate. Committee members are encouraged to voice any concerns or issues, and the Chair will be responsible for initiating any review of Committee structure or intent.

Issue negotiations should occur within the Group’s meetings, not through the media or outside public forums. Summary minutes will be prepared following each meeting. Once the Committee has approved the minutes they will be posted on the departments website and be open to public access. The Chair and program area staff will relay feedback and input to department executive and the minister.

Members of the Committee will be expected to be productive and contributing members. Members will:

- Respect the rights, dignity and worth of all other persons;
- Behave with appropriate decorum;
- Be fair, equitable, considerate and honest in all dealings with others;
- Respect the confidentiality appropriate to issues of a sensitive nature;
- Ensure that all members are given sufficient opportunity to express opinions, and that all opinions are given due consideration and weight;
- Listen to what others have to say and keep an open mind;
- Contribute positively to the discussions;
- Seek opportunities to address and resolve issues;
- Committee members should not characterize the positions or comments of other committee members to those outside of this committee;
- Treat one another with at least professional cordiality and deference, even if there is disagreement over stated positions or issues;
- Members who feel that they are no longer able to participate in good faith, on the basis of the Terms of Reference, are expected to voluntarily withdraw from the membership. Failing that, GoA and Feral Horse Committee Majority reserves the right to dismiss committee members who do not abide by the Terms of Reference.

The Committee Chair is responsible for ensuring the Committee members conduct themselves within the guidelines of the Terms of Reference. Failure to abide by the Committee Terms of Reference will be addressed by the committee Chair who may formally remove members or member organizations from the Committee.

Members will have a primary representative. If the primary representative is unable to attend, they will notify the chair that the alternate will attend in their place.

Recommendation and Advice

The goal is for recommendations made by the Committee to be documented using a Level of Support Model. This will provide a consensus based model to resolve disputes on the advice provided to the department on particular issues. The model uses six levels to facilitate defining key issues underlying non-support and aids in focusing the discussion and in finding solutions. This information will be recorded along with the recommendation.

Level of Support Model:

<i>Options</i>	<i>Level of Support</i>
1. Full support	Support
2. Acceptable	

3. Support with reservations

4. I am not thrilled but can live with it

5. Need more information or more discussion

Non-Support

6. Cannot support it and cannot accept it

Where support cannot be reached by all members, the chair will work with the committee to explore options to modify recommendations and advice in a manner that can be fully supported by the committee. If support still cannot be reached, the department will note the dissenting opinion and will take that into consideration in any decisions made by the department.

Scope

The intent of the Committee is to provide advice in a forum of open dialogue on feral horses and their management within the Equine Management Zones in the Eastern Slopes of Alberta.

Management of stray animals outside of the Equine Management Zones are out of scope for the committee.

Review of Mandate

The Committee will review its purpose, scope and achievements each year to ensure it is meeting the needs of the various members. If the purpose, scope and achievements are not meeting the needs of the members, the Committee can re-examine the terms of reference.