

## **MESSAGES FROM ALBERTA FORESTRY PARKS AND TOURISM**

### **RE: ALBERTA WILDFIRES RESPONSE**

**May 19, 2023**

Alberta's government is actively working to support and find solutions for livestock producers who have been affected by wildfires.

Fire has impacted a significant number of grazing dispositions and some provincial grazing reserves. Damage to provincial grazing reserves is being assessed and repairs will be required before they can be accessed by ranchers.

Our priority is to work with disposition holders and Provincial Grazing Reserves Associations, and quickly provide any necessary assessments or authorizations to help them repair critical infrastructure as soon as possible.

Under the provincial state of emergency, grazing disposition holders with grazing capacity can accept livestock from other producers subject to the following conditions:

- Grazing disposition holders remain responsible for stewardship of the disposition.
- Grazing disposition holders who accept other livestock must report the additional livestock on the lease within seven calendar days to their local rangeland agrologist.
- Grazing disposition holders must report any measures taken with respect to supplemental feeding within seven calendar days.
- The health of the rangeland must be maintained.
- The use by the other livestock must be reported on the dispositions holder's stock return.

We are accepting applications for temporary grazing on vacant public lands. For more information, call 310-LAND (5263).

We encourage ranchers with private or leased lands and additional grazing capacity to support their neighbours and apply to accept livestock from other producers who are looking to relocate their cattle.

In the interim, the best options to hold and feed livestock are rodeo grounds, exhibition grounds and auction markets which have the needed infrastructure.

#### **KEY FACTS**

Infrastructure damage impacts have occurred for 2023 livestock grazing in affected areas on both Crown and private lands. Fire has impacted a significant number of grazing dispositions, resulting in significant losses to infrastructure (primarily fences and corals) which are critical to the operation and grazing of dispositions.

Extended dry conditions beyond the wildfires further exacerbate and expand the challenges for livestock producers limiting the extent of the grazing season.

Staff from Forestry Parks and Tourism, Agriculture and Irrigation and Environment and Protected Areas continue to monitor this situation and if conditions further deteriorate Alberta will continue to role out strategies to support agriculture producers.

These will include authorizations for other livestock on dispositions with extra available forage, emergency haying and grazing and strategies to help address water shortages.

## **BACKGROUND**

Central and Northwestern Alberta and localized parts of the province are experiencing dry conditions resulting in slower than usual green-up of grazing lands for livestock.

The situation was further exacerbated in the first week of May 2023 when an extremely large number of out-of-control wildfires and wind events resulted in numerous evacuations and expansive areas of private and Crown land being burned.

Impacts to the rangeland that provides the forage for the grazing animals may be short-term.

The fires occurred in the spring and most of the burnt crown rangeland is forested land. This means if there is sufficient moisture, the potential loss of grazing opportunity will be less severe and should only cause a slight delay in animal entry (provided the infrastructure can be replaced).

If dry conditions persist the impact of fire will be exacerbated.

The fires have affected some Provincial Grazing Reserves. Three Creeks PGR is most significantly impacted. The infrastructure on PGRs is government owned and damage assessments and cost estimates to replace these assets will be conducted.

If dry conditions persist, FPT and EPA will implement strategies used in 2021, which include:

- Existing grazing disposition holders, including leases, licences, and permits, with additional grazing capacity can apply to accept livestock from other producers who are in need of additional feed.
- Applications for temporary grazing or haying on vacant public lands.
- Permitting grazers in the forest reserve to extend the time for grazing where there is sufficient forage to do so.
- Providing livestock producers with best management practices and advice on how to best cope with drought conditions.
- EPA will expedite Water Act Approvals and Temporary Diversion Licences.
- Rangeland Agrologists will address individual producer issues with fire recover